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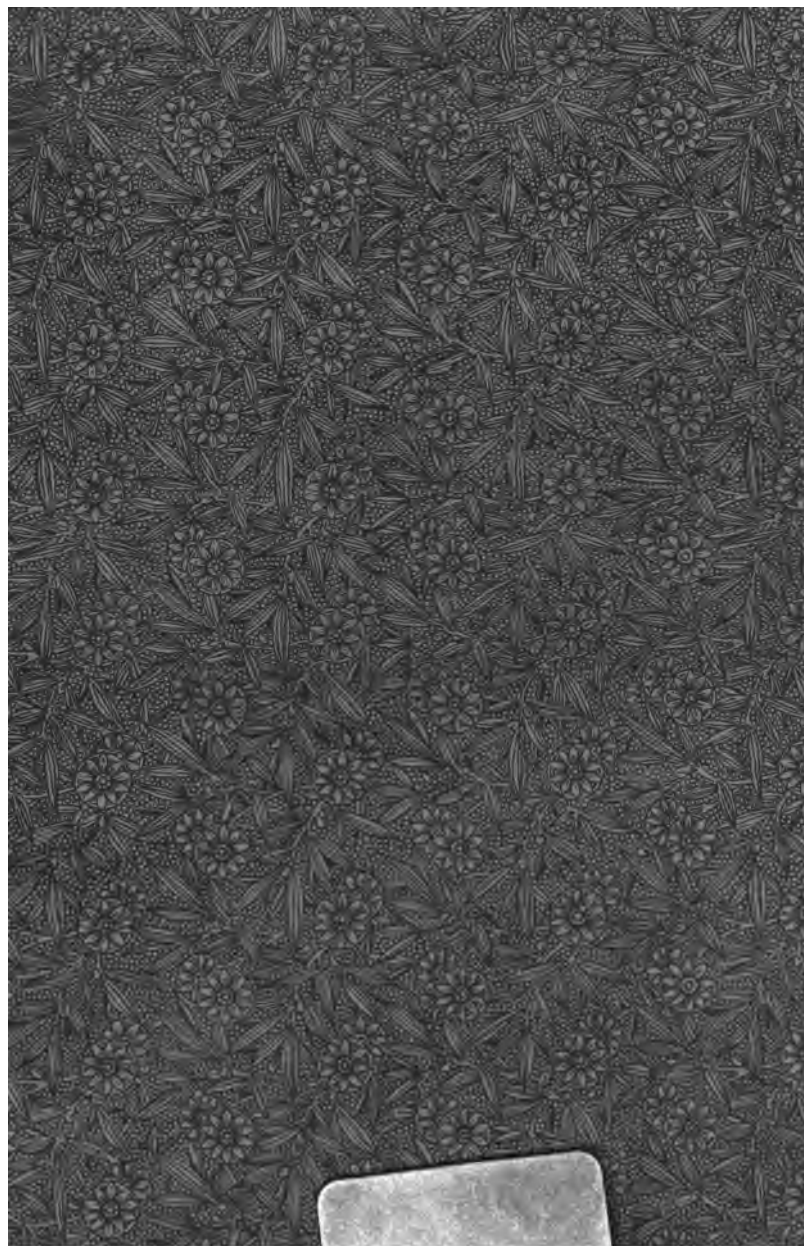
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BORN TO LUCK.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

The Author of "Wrecked Early in Life."

VOL. I.



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BORN TO LUCK.

CHAPTER I.

HALKINGHAM.

"Th' factory bell has gone this five minutes, and Will and th' little 'un will be locked out again. Did you call 'em, Charity?"

"No, Matthew, I did no such thing. Will has had his breakfast long since, and gone to th' fair at Westerton."

"Just like him," grumbled the first speaker; "I'll be bound he was up soon enough to go a pleasuring; and he expects thee and me to work hard, lass, for him to play the fool, larking about the country with that girl of his. How does he think to keep a wife, I wonder?"

"The same as the rest do, I suppose," replied Charity; "Bessie Smith is a handy

girl, and will put things out to th' best ; besides, Mr. Green says she is one of their first hands, and I shouldna' wonder neither, she has such deft fingers of her own."

"Bessie is all that and more," said Matthew gruffly ; "she is sadly too good for Will ; but it's the same with all women, they are ready to favour a harum-scarum chap like Will, with a goodish-looking face and a 'ticing manner, and nought in the back-ground. It is a pity but Bessie had a mind to look out for a husband of more substance. It's poor marrying to work at th' factory afterwards."

"If she had set her heart on *you* now, Matthew," interrupted Charity, with a sly smile.

"For shame, Charity ! If you set agen me, too, what is a poor man to do ? I don't mind owning that at one time I had thought to make a home of my own with Bessie, but that has all gone by long since, and thee and me, sister Charity, must stick together

through thick and thin, and leave th' young 'uns to fight it out."

"Forget what I said, Matthew! It was all a joke, but an ill-timed one, to reap that old feeling up. I know at heart, Matthew, you wish Will well, and Eve too; but it is vexing that you don't remember how much younger they are than us, Matthew, they want a bit of amusement now and again at their age."

"I am not speaking agen *that*, Charity; but it is th' old story—always lazy and heedless—and, as long as they can have a comfortable home like this kept for 'em, there'll be no mending matters. I don't begrudge it 'em, far from it; but they ought both to put a shoulder to the wheel."

"That is true!" said Charity, thoughtfully.

"Well, I'm off to work agen now," said Matthew, "and don't trouble about that there remark of mine. I'm all right so long as sister Charity keeps single, but that's none

to be expected for long," he added affectionately, and with a smile that softened the rough face into that rainbow beauty which is but a reflection—a colouring borrowed from a warmer light beyond—even from the interior graces of mind and disposition.

Matthew Joyce was a good man, a sterling character, one of honest repute amongst men, and kindly-natured withal; but he won small favour from his fellows, and was, perhaps, hardly appreciated even in his own household, except by his sister Charity. That is not saying much after all, for Charity did not belie her name. She had that universal love which overlooks faults, that ready excuse for human infirmities which so few can frame.

Nevertheless, Matthew was a good man, and Charity knew it, and that was the very reason why she was so willing to give him a sharp retort, if ever her gentle lips might be said to do such a thing.

The fact was Matthew had acquired a

habit of grumbling, and a surliness of manner which made him obnoxious to most people. This did not deceive Charity. She, who had lived with him all the years of their mutual lives, knew his real worth, and she wanted others to see him as she did ; and she knew that, so long as he ruled not his own spirit, the wish was vain. People *will* judge by the bearing and conversation of a man, and rarely pause to discriminate between that and the uprightness of spirit which makes a man's character. And it would be a most uncomfortable world if it were otherwise. If everybody was as transparent as a looking-glass it would be a sorry world—we should not all bear reflection as well as Matthew Joyce—and the detection of covert evil would have more painful results than the obliquity of vision to hidden virtue.

But Charity would fain have had Matthew seem to be what he *was*—a loyal-hearted, generous man. For Charity could remember his manner being very different ; the present

surliness was the result of that long since "gone by," which Matthew had spoken of, before Bessie Smith had evinced any preference for Will Joyce.

Matthew might well call their little cottage a comfortable home. If comfort depended upon cleanliness, here was the embodied essence of it. A cheerful fire flickered between the well-brightened bars of the small grate, invoking the kettle to sing its monotonous, but not unmusical ditty. The whitened hearth-stone was adorned by a brightly burnished old settle, whereon a grey tabby cat supported its lazy length, and purred in comfortable chorus to the more lively kettle. A coarse, but spotlessly white cloth was spread upon the table, where a solitary cup and plate of bread-and-butter were laid for the use of the only member of the family, whom we have not in some fashion, however cursorily, described. Free from dust or smear, the old furniture, poor as it was, shone resplendently, as if neither

labour nor beeswax had been spared by the busy hands of Charity.

If you look through the window of the cottage you may notice, amongst the wall-flowers and scarlet-runners so carefully trained, numerous bees busily at work; and, underneath the hedge beyond, two or three hives are fixed, in and out of which the bees are constantly buzzing, pursuing the labour of life in their cheerful fashion.

Altogether, Charity and Matthew had so embellished the cottage and its surroundings by their industry, that it was a model one, and the envy of many of their neighbours in the village. Not but what there were decent managing housewives besides Charity Joyce to be found, but some had wasteful husbands; others slovenly children, and few had, therefore, the same advantages as Charity.

A few years ago Halkingham had been one of those sweetly primitive villages which we now so rarely see, where the whole aspect is significant of peaceful happiness, where fru-

gality exists in its most alluring form, and modest country maidens, with rosy smiling faces, may be met on their way to church or market, in cotton gowns and straw bonnets, neatly trimmed with ribbon, and who drop the unfailing curtsey of respect to the gentry as they pass with little danger of soiling their short skirts.

We all of us remember such places, and have noted that the whitewashed cottages are not indicative of merely outward cleanliness—those model English cottages—in which the matrons are never too busy to give a smile of recognition to their friends as they pass by their open doors—open because they are much too sensible of the value of fresh air to be afraid of the dust adding to their labour; and their happy faces are rubicund with health, and contrast with their white aprons and lilac gowns to perfection.

Such a village had Halkingham been but a few years ago. The little shops had waited their supplies by the weekly carrier, but now

that functionary was supplanted, for a railway had been made, and trains were absolutely passing, not daily, but hourly across the village green, which once the boys and youths had made merry with their shouts during their evening games of cricket and football.

It was an unfortunate day for Halkingham when the promoters of the branch line from the junction to Westerton decided to carry it through Halkingham—not entirely unfortunate, for there were many of its inhabitants who welcomed the project ; these were chiefly the younger people, though even they were loud enough in their complaints when their chosen playground was desecrated by the ruthless rail.

The old man sighed, and oblivious of any commercial advantage thus given to his neighbourhood, he said—

“ I wish it had not come in my day ; it’s all very well in its way, maybe, but they might have let it a be while we old ’uns lived. Time

enough for Halkingham to have the railway when the young 'uns take our places, for my part, I can never bear the sight of them engines a-whizzing and a-whirling along, and the smell! Bah! There has not been the like of it in Halkingham for many a generation—if ever. Nought 'appens by chance, and it may be th' Almighty's will that folk should travel faster; but, thank Him for His mercies, old Ralph will not be called upon to partake of this latter one."

And when the green was cut up, and rails laid down where the verdant grass had flourished, old Ralph passed away, and people said the loss of the green had killed him, he could not exist without his accustomed pipe and tobacco there at night, as he watched the games of his great-grandchildren, and the intermediate generations.

So he had quietly departed to that silent land where he dwells undisturbed by the progress of life. So much for the conservatism of old age.

But the railway had, in truth, marred the sweetness of Halkingham. It was a spot highly favoured by nature ; and the Halkingham farmers were praised for their skill, but such rich pastures were after all due to more than clever farming ; the soil was of the richest, and the valley was so sheltered by hills that the blighting influence of the east wind was little dreaded, and rain was sufficiently plentiful to give increase to the crops. The springs, too, from the hill sides watered the ground, as sundry sluices betokened ; but land that needs draining must certainly under felicitous circumstances yield abundantly, and the sluices were carried down to the river Fisk, and so all superabundance of surface water was got rid of without any great amount of trouble.

The fields were divided by hedges, deprived, we own, of much possible beauty by the renowned Halkingham farmers, but they looked trim and neat, and there were shady lanes to be found where untrimmed and even

floral hedges met the eye. And trees grew apace in this goodly neighbourhood; many a decayed monarch of the forest was conspicuous also, ivy-clad, as one robed in beautiful garments for the grave.

The destructive hand of the woodman was kept in check here; the lord of the manor valued every stick and stone upon his estate, as is little the custom in this money-grubbing age when the annual felling of timber is made a matter of convenience to a landlord's purse, rather than to promote the healthy growth of vegetation.

One of Halkingham's chief attractions was the Fisk, which meandered through the vale; it was a broad river, and the water was clear enough to tempt mermaids to be truants from their saline element.

Here "full many a *fish* was born to blush unseen" for lack of wooers. But this did not last. The railway was made; but that was but a secondary promoter of spoliation,

for the river was doubly unfortunate to be both the charm of Halkingham and the decoy whereby its chief ill came. Strangers had occasionally come to fish in it, and had stayed to luxuriate in this peaceful vale. Boats were kept by the proprietor of the little inn, who enlarged his premises, and his ideas, to suit his increasing guests from adjacent towns.

So far so good ; but crowds carry contamination on their skirts, and so it chanced that one enterprising stranger became enraptured with the beauty of Halkingham, and, like many a selfish lover, had little consideration for anything but his own gratification, and so he did not “ stay to bless,” but rather the reverse.

He built a large cotton factory, and the river was a great inducement to the venture : but he was fond of lovely scenery, and his wife also, and they flattered themselves that their cultivated eyes were more discerning than those of the original inhabitants. And so

they might be, but “where ignorance is bliss ’tis folly to be wise” in more than the usual sense.

It has been said “we live by admiration, hope and love.” And thus our country friends enjoy scenery—they live by it; they drink it in, day by day, with every breath of their unawakened soul; and their lives are unconsciously attuned to the beauty around them, and virtue dwells securely, perhaps, from ignorance of the incentive motive.

When Mr. and Mrs. Manory noticed the cheerful countenances and clean homes of these privileged villagers, they could scarcely have realized how much the face of nature, and their uncritical reception of the goodly portion of it which they were free to admire, influenced the circumstances of these apparently unobservant villagers. We cannot live in the vicinity of beauty unmoved—it asserts itself significantly, if silently. As mind is biased by association with a

stronger mind, be it for good or evil, so our daily juxtaposition to *everything* pure and beautiful occasions corresponding sentiments in ourselves.

Had Mr. Manory felt this he might have hesitated about building so unsightly an object as a huge factory to mar the peaceful vale. He might have deemed it pitiful that beauty should be so unfitly associated, and that vice should begin to dwell where, to speak in a general sense, for there are black sheep in every flock, only virtue had lived and died since the beginning of human existence in Halkingham.

But Mr. Manory built his factory, and Halkingham was changed. Cotton had to be manufactured there; and the villagers knew as much about the process as the trout in the river had once known of an angler's art. So strangers inundated Halkingham, and brick houses were built for these stranger work people, and they brought stranger habits to these primitive country folk. Ale houses

multiplied, and drunkenness was visible in the newly formed streets. I do not say that it had been altogether unknown before, but the transgressors had had the grace to be ashamed of it, and to shun the public gaze ; whereas, now it was a nightly occurrence to see half a dozen drunkards rolling about the roads, or engaged in unseemly squabbles, till finally locked up for the night by some vigilant policeman.

The morality of the place was corrupted—the young girls became flighty ; the older women gossips, and their homes were less tidy, while there were any quantity of that ne'er-do-well class of young men whom god-fearing parents dreaded their own sons and daughters to associate with. This was the state of Halkingham at the beginning of our story.

CHAPTER II.

THE JOYCES.

THOUGH we have attributed much evil to the innovation of the mill hands into Halkingham, the Joyce family cannot be classed with those who had proved to be such a deleterious example. There was an evidence of superiority in the manners and appearance of the family; they were but respectable working people, it is true, but they were very different to the ordinary type of operatives; and they had come to the place under somewhat singular circumstances.

Their mother had been Mrs. Manory's maid before her marriage—a favourite, spoiled servant, who had married about the same time as her young mistress. The husband of the maid was a carpenter, who had got on in the world, and was doing a nice little business of his own at one time.

But his wife had not proved much help to him ; she had lived too long in luxury, and been too much indulged as a maid to make a prudent wife.

Mary Joyce was young and foolish in those days, and fond of dress ; she had not learned the wisdom of laying up for a rainy day, and when her husband sickened, and became unfit for work, she had to reap the fruits of her folly. She, however, was not one to give way under difficulties, and her character was improved by adversity. She began to support her husband and family by washing, and, being a famous laundress, she soon had a good connection. The ladies for whom she worked often sent her home with a basket of delicacies for her sick husband, as well as the bundle of linen ; and, by contrivance and hard work, Mary Joyce kept the sick man in comfort.

When he died, she was persuaded by Mrs. Manory to remove to Halkingham, that her children might work at the factory, and

Mary was nothing loath to go, for she dearly loved her former mistress, and had a feeling of certainty that her family would retain the interest of Mrs. Manory, if she were taken away from them suddenly, for Mary Joyce had long known that she had a diseased heart, and that, consequently, her life was precarious.

Mrs. Manory was a good-natured lady, but had very little judgment, and her object in bringing Mary Joyce away from all her own relatives was not only that her old maid might have good country air, and be near herself, but that also she, Mrs. Manory, might do something for her little namesake and godchild, Evelyn Joyce. She had some quixotic idea of educating the latter with her own children, and had given a half-promise to Mary to that effect, but Mr. Manory interfered with his good common-sense, and all Mrs. Manory's coaxings failed to make him yield the point.

Mrs. Manory's kindness, nevertheless, did much to improve the condition of the

family ; they rented their cottage at a cheap rate, and had their little garden supplied with vegetable plants from the gardens at the Laurels, as the new mansion of the manufacturer was called. Mary washed for her old mistress, and for one or two other families who had settled in the neighbourhood, and her children wore the cast-off clothes of the children at the Laurels ; and Evelyn, who was not only interesting as the namesake and godchild, but a bewitching little fairy, of refined appearance, was frequently invited to play with the young ladies, oftener than was wise, for the child grew up with larger ideas than were likely to be gratified in after-life ; and Mrs. Joyce often sighed forebodingly when Evelyn came home from the Laurels decked out by the little ladies in some fine garment far too rich and gay for one in Evelyn's sphere. The child well became such clothes, and knew it, for when was vanity ever absent from a little girl's heart ?

Evelyn had her vanity fed at the Laurels, and, something more—a spirit of ambition burned within the little maiden's heart at all times, and each visit to the Laurels encouraged the flame. We will not say she envied her little friends, for a sweeter disposition never displayed itself than that of Evelyn Joyce; but she murmured to herself, “How unfair it all is! Why am I born poor? How nice it would be for us all to be like the Manorys! And they would like it too—they wish I was their sister—and, only fancy, they say I should be the queen of them all, because I am so beautiful. So beautiful!” replied the girl, under her breath. “What does it mean? Ah! I know. Like Cinderella, whom the prince saw and loved. Ah, if a real, live prince would come for *me*, and make me a princess, to live in a grand house and never work!”

Yes, here was another secret of Evelyn's—she hated work! But the little girl was a strange compound. She hated work; and,

yet, when the young ladies at the Laurels, in their play hours, offered to teach her for fun—just like school—who was so eager as Evelyn to profit by their instructions! It became at last no play, but real, earnest work; and, being a clever child, Evelyn acquired much useful knowledge in this casual way.

She was so much with the Manorys that she got, as well as for learning, a taste for the luxuries they allowed her to share with them. Her brothers would often tease the little girl about her correct language, and this unequal friendship, telling her “she had better play with Peggy or Susan in the village, and copy their talk, instead of apeing her betters.” But the little girl bore it all with equanimity, sustained by her hopeful, sanguine nature, which kept her faithfully, though secretly expectant of some future luck of a fairy-like description.

Had Mrs. Manory left Evelyn unnoticed, she would have developed her natural graces

of disposition better. She was sweet-tempered and pliable, to a certain extent; but, like many good-natured, easy people, she had a firm will when she chose to exercise it. She was ambitious and vain, two bad qualities for a cottage home; and the training she had received brought out the bad points of her character.

When Mrs. Joyce died, as she had expected suddenly, Evelyn was still young, and Charity dealt very tenderly with the little sister who was so affectionate and sweet, yet so fond of things outside the pale of her natural sphere of life.

But Matthew and Charity, on one point were agreed about her—she must begin to earn her own living; not so much because it was necessary, as for her own good.

Matthew was now following his father's trade, and doing well; and Charity did the washing now alone, which she had once assisted her mother to do. Will worked, off and on, at the mill too; but Evelyn did not

like work, and factory work less than any other, and she looked down upon the girls who went there, so Matthew decreed that this discipline was good for Evelyn; that she would thereby find her level. And Charity, with sundry misgivings, endorsed his opinion.

So Evelyn went, after many tears of opposition. And for a week Evelyn had a woeful life amongst her fellow-workers—her looks, and her fine name, and her many little affectations gave dissatisfaction, but no one could long resist Evelyn's sweetness—she never retaliated, and probably she felt the justice of their remarks; but they ceased, and Evelyn became a prime favourite—a favourite everywhere! Ah, Evelyn Joyce! Will the prince be overcome some day as you dream of? Success is nearer than you imagine, but in a different guise—princes are not so easily caught in these days, and you must elevate yourself to meet such unprecedented condescension.

CHAPTER III.

UNCLE ABRAM'S MONEY.

CHARITY JOYCE was busy washing before Evelyn came down. She had a second room in that tiny cottage, which was converted into a laundry, greatly to Evelyn's regret, who would fain have had the work done in the little kitchen, so that they might boast of a parlour like some of their neighbours. But Charity knew that the greatest cleanliness was essential to a laundress, and remained deaf to Evelyn's entreaties.

As she stands at the wash-tub, with her sleeves tucked up, singing cheerfully, and dashing the soap-suds unceremoniously about, she makes a pretty picture enough. She is quite young—only twenty-two—her features are good, her complexion clear and rosy, the blue eyes thoughtful and kind, the mouth sweet, and the chin softly curved. The face

would have struck one as denoting weakness of character but for the squareness of the forehead, which gave a penetrative cast to the pensive eyes. She steals furtive glances ever and anon through the open door, and at last is gratified by Evelyn's appearance.

No wonder that such a castle-building young girl, as we have represented Evelyn to be, should come down late for breakfast, after lying, mayhap, half the night awake, in imaginary greatness. She looks refreshed by sleep at all events; and is evidently hungry, as slice after slice of bread-and-butter rapidly disappears, and a second cup of tea is emptied before she finds voice to greet sister Charity. The cat is more fortunate, for it has walked lazily from the settle to Evelyn's chair, stretching itself exhaustively in the act, and is rubbing against her cotton dress, purring like a spoiled animal, as Evelyn carelessly smooths its glossy coat with her disengaged hand. Careless grace is expressive of Evelyn's every movement—natural, unconscious grace.

—the very fall of her shapely hand on the cat's back shows her character—that easy negligence of action would be as becoming to a lady as a cottager.

Evelyn was tall and stately, on rather a large scale perhaps, but excessively graceful; her figure was well proportioned, with sloping, though broad shoulders, and a neck sufficiently firm to set the head well. And what a charm was in the face! The same complexion as Charity, but the colour less fixed; the same eyes, equally sweet, but more mirthful; precisely the same mouth, and the hair of the same flaxen shade, but Charity's was straight and scanty, while Evelyn owned a profusion of waving locks—those rippling waves which make any face look sunny, and which have usually some dimpling smiles to correspond with them; but Evelyn had no dimples, and her chin was too firm and square to be quite in harmony with the rest of the face; but only a keen observer would notice this, or get beyond the

sweet eyes and pleasant mouth, which, when open, displayed a row of straight white teeth.

When Evelyn smiled she thoroughly conquered all prejudices. It was like the sun gradually emerging from the horizon, progressing so slowly, so full of promise to begin with, and eventually as dazzling in its perfection, in proportion to its degree, as that glorious orb. Truly a smile beautiful enough to charm one's heart away ; but the Grecian nose, and stately carriage were what gave Evelyn the refined appearance which would have disgraced no aristocratic parentage.

"Charity," she inquired, when her hunger was appeased, "do you know what day it is?"

"The fifth of April, Eve."

"Oh, I don't mean that, Charity," said Evelyn, laughing, and she added disappointedly, "You might remember, Charity!"

"Why, Eve?" said Charity, gravely. "What have working people like us got to do with thinking about birthdays?"

“Oh, you *know* after all, Charity! Only fancy! I am sixteen to-day, and I have worked at that horrid factory two years.”

Evelyn sighed, and looked like one who for the moment was losing faith in some beautiful beyond. Sixteen! and no fairy visible yet!

“Charity, I declare the postman is coming. Who is the letter for, I wonder? Why it is—yes! it is for *us*, Charity!” she shouted gleefully.

And Charity came forward, roused out of her assumed apathy by the exclamation.

“Let me look!” she said, taking the letter with her soapy hands.

“Oh, Charity,” said Evelyn, deprecatingly, “it *is* for us, and your suds will spoil it.”

“Not so hasty, Eve! It is the Misses Joyce, and it must be meant for mother. Poor mother!” she added regretfully.

“No, Charity, it is ours—yours and mine—it is the Misses Joyce, Charity, and the *es* is put because we are plural, you dear goose. Who shall open it?”

"You shall, Evelyn," said Charity, smiling at her eagerness; "you can read writing much quicker nor me."

The first thing that fell out, on removing the envelope, was a scrap of newspaper. Charity picked it up, and her face looked flurried as she read it; but Evelyn was devouring the accompanying letter with wondering eyes and flushed cheeks.

"Charity," she said, wildly, "he has come! Not the prince—I mean the fairy—this letter says that you and I are legatees. Yes! that is it, Charity—legatees! Is not that a grand word? We have a thousand five hundred pounds each, Charity. Oh, whatever shall we do with it?"

And Evelyn flung her arms round Charity, laughing and crying in the intensity of her excitement, and half smothering her less impetuous sister. But, forcibly calming herself, she continued—

"The lawyer, who writes this, says he has been advertising for us in the daily papers—

only think of *our* names—yours and mine, Charity, being in print! I wonder, did any one think they were pretty names? And he says, Charity, his clerk will wait upon us any day we like to receive our instructions. How grand it all is, to give orders like a lady and be waited on! Who in the name of fortune is the late uncle he mentions? I don't know," she added, with a merry shout, "unless he is the myth that Mrs. Manory talks about—a fairy person, you know, Charity, not living but appearing now and again to be alive, and cheating one into believing its reality."

"Don't be wild, and lose all the bit of sense you have, Eve," said Charity, looking tearfully triumphant. "I know all about it—father's brother went to Australia when we was only babies. Father said he was prospering well there; and now he has died, and I suppose has left no children. Anyway, this paper says—'If this should meet the eye of Charity or Evelyn Joyce, nieces of one

Abraham Joyce, late of Melbourne, deceased, they, Charity and Evelyn Joyce, will hear of something to their advantage on applying to Messrs. Graham and Croft. Offices, 64, Chancery Lane.' "

"Yes, that is it, Charity," interrupted the eager Evelyn; "and some relative of ours, the lawyer says, has called at 64, Chancery Lane, and given him our address, and had been well pleased to hear of our good fortune. That must be mother's uncle, Charity, who is a butler somewhere in London."

"I wish Matthew was about," said Charity.

"And Will, too," said Evelyn. "Won't Will be pleased? How lucky I was not at the factory! I shall never go again!" she added, decisively.

"Don't make up your mind too sharp, Eve. It seems no end of money, fifteen hundred pounds, to be sure; but I don't know as I shall give up washing. I shouldn't like to be idle; and I suppose even fifteen hundred pounds will come to an end, if we

live long enough. And Will and Matthew have none; and they may get ill as father did, and who knows but Will and Bessie may have a family to be seen to?"

Kind Charity! never a thought of self to mar her perfect character, even when her sudden fortune might well have excused it.

"It's all very well for you to talk, Charity," said Eve, "but I don't like work. Perhaps *you* would never be quite happy to be a lady, but I mean to be one, and I shall go to school."

"Foolish Eve, you're scholar good enough," interrupted Charity; "besides you are too old; no one goes to begin schooling at your age."

"Yes, they do, Charity; besides it would not be quite like beginning, even with me. Minnie Manory is seventeen, and lots of girls, as old as she is, who come to see her are her schoolfellows."

"Mother would never have liked to hear you forget to put Miss afore the names of

the young ladies, Evelyn," said Charity, gravely.

"But it was different then," said Evelyn. "I have always been almost like a sister to them, especially when we were younger, before they went away to school; but now, that I have money, they will want me to say Minnie and Maude, I am sure."

"But you are only a factory girl after all, Eve."

Evelyn bit her lips with vexation.

"That is not my fault. I never wanted to work at the factory. But never mind, Charity," she said, recovering her temper, "it was obliged to be, I suppose. But now it is unnecessary; and I shall go to school, Charity; and though it does take money to have a good education, I can live upon very little afterwards, and make my own clothes, and be really industrious, only in a more genteel way."

Charity smiled at the notion of Evelyn being industrious, but kissed her fondly in

recognition of the spirit of forgiveness, which made Evelyn speak lightly of the coercion which had been brought to bear upon her during these last two years.

“ And, Charity, you shall share with Matthew, and I with Will,” continued Evelyn.

Charity smiled again, as she calculated how little Evelyn was likely to be able to spare after gratifying her own fancies and apparent necessities.

“ We will wait till Matthew comes home, and have his advice, Eve; and now I must go back to my washing, and try and put thoughts of th’ money out of my mind, or I shall do no manner of good again this day. Aye, but ’tis a windfall to poor folks like us ! ”

And Charity, practical, industrious girl, was soon at the wash-tub, with a soberer face than her wont.

“ Mrs. Manory asked me to go up to the Laurels this afternoon, as it was my birth-

day, Charity ; and I think I shall go to the shop and buy some clean ribbon for a neck-tie ; and perhaps I had better wear my stuff dress, it would look the nicest for visiting in."

"And I am certain sure as Mrs. Manory would as lief see you in your cotton gown as usual," said Charity.

"Oh, no, Mrs. Manory is quite different to that—she always likes to see me smart."

Charity knew this was the truth, so forbore to interfere again.

"I will get the dinner ready first, Charity ; but I could not bear to see Matthew—to tell him what I mean to do with the money, so I will just go for a walk by the river, and quietly think it over, while you make Matthew understand that I am at liberty now to please myself. I couldn't eat a morsel of anything to-day, Charity, after hearing such news ; and I am so fidgety, with pleasure and impatience, to get and use the money that I am half wild."

"It is well you made such a famous breakfast, Eve—it will keep you alive till afternoon, I daresay; and Mrs. Manory's tea will tempt you to eat a bit, you saucy girl. You have not had tea since last year there, but you must not think ill, and be willing to take offence if, now the young ladies are growing up, Mrs. Manory thinks fit for you to take your cup of tea in the servants' 'all in lieu of the schoolroom."

Evelyn flushed with annoyance, but made no comment upon Charity's warning speech. Evelyn had always been a little dainty in her appetite, and Charity attributed her present disinclination to eat to the fact that there was only cold boiled mutton and potatoes for dinner, with a cup of butter milk to drink, and no pudding. But to-day Eve was more than saucy, she was in a fool's paradise, and even forbidden fruit would fail to tempt this ethereal personage down to earth again.

So Evelyn donned her best stuff dress, with a congratulatory soliloquy—"There

now, I look something more like. If the dress had only been silk and a trifle longer in the skirt, I should do very well. But, for the present, perhaps this is best."

And with a consolatory expectation of future grandeur, in a robe, whose ample folds should expand themselves into the sweeping train, which she deemed the perfection of a lady's toilet, Evelyn bade Charity a cheerful farewell, and set off for a walk on the shady side of the river, which was skirted for a considerable distance by a wood.

Often and often had Evelyn played as a child in that same wood, and had crowned herself with the bluebells and wood sorrel that grew there in abundance. As she looked at them now, for the primroses were fading on this early spring day, and giving place to these more pretentious rivals, Evelyn smiled to remember how she had thus adorned herself, dreaming, meanwhile, of a day like this when she should be able to reject the modest dress of her station, and come

out more gorgeously in gayer, richer costumes to meet her fairy prince.

“It is nicer as it is,” she said to herself; “I shall have it all without the prince, and perhaps Cinderella was not so very much in love with *him*, though he *was* with her, only all the splendour enchanted her. I should not quite like to live always with some one I did not love. No! If ever I marry, it will be for love, come what may.”

Her face looked infinitely winning in its feminine softness, as she came to this conclusion; but, even then, she knew in her heart that she would not let herself love as fancy prompted—that a lover of her own sphere in life might sue in vain.

Ambition was her ruling passion, and love—affection—all else must follow its bidding. What a sweet character would this have been, with its tenderness, and happy, peaceful temper, but for this preponderant and discordant element which Mrs. Manory's mistaken kindness had fostered!

And Evelyn little imagined what sacrifices her ambition would demand of her. She had already a glimmering idea that, if she married, her choice would be not less her choice for being a gentleman; but, in her youthful simplicity, her mind went no further. She knew she wished to be a lady, and dress like one, and be familiar with ladies, such as Minnie and Maude Manory and their friends, but she did not give such a terrible name as ambition to her wishes.

Had she done so, her knowledge of life was too limited to grasp the full meaning of it. She little knew that hundreds of her fellow-creatures were that minute sacrificing, not merely love, affection, and the interests once dear to them, but honour, principle, and, as a consequence, happiness here and hereafter, at that unworthy shrine. She had never read Shakespeare, and been moved to pity by Wolsey's charge to Cromwell. But her conscience was fresh from the hand of God, so to speak. She had not deadened

it yet ; she had lived purely and guilelessly, and free from temptation so far ; and when the day should come for her to disobey the dictates of her higher self, it would be a hard struggle between right and wrong. “ By that sin fell the angels ; how can man, then, the image of his Maker, hope to win by it ? ” True words ! than which the Bard of Avon never coined more logical.

Evelyn had not long indulged in these pleasant dreams, when she heard heavy footsteps behind her. She walked on quickly, but the following footsteps quickened also. Thinking it might be Matthew, she turned round, with a flush on her face, ready to break out into open defiance if he had come, at Charity's bidding, to give her unwelcome counsel.

But a younger man than Matthew confronted her ; no serious glance met hers, but a merry, admiring one ; and a well-pleased voice said—

“ I thought it was you, Eve ; you've led

me a fine tramp and no mistake. Why wasn't you at th' factory to-day ? ”

“ Because I did not choose to work ; and, what may seem strange to you, I never mean to go there again.”

The countenance of her interlocutor changed woefully, as he exclaimed—

“ I never ! What a girl you are for a joke now ! ”

“ It is no joke, Henry Delmar.”

“ What's i' th' wind now, Eve ? Are you going out service ? ”

“ Service indeed ! ” said Evelyn, with a saucy toss of her head.

“ Well, but Eve, you don't mean it, my girl ? ” said the young man, seriously.

“ Mean what, Henry Delmar ? ”

“ Why do you say Henry Delmar, twice-running, in that slow, precise way ? It is as t'other girls say, you've picked up some d—d fine notions along of them Manory set.”

“ Then you are quite mistaken,” said

Evelyn, omitting the obnoxious mode of address; "I am not going to the factory again, because I have no need."

"I wish, Eve," said the young man with a sigh, "you were more like th' rest of th' lasses. You allers seem as if you was holding your head too high for a fellow, and to-day more than ever. A sweeter lass never lived when you choose to be pleasant, and let a chap walk with you in a decent way, instead of keeping him ten yards off, with arms akimbo, looking like a fool as doesna' know how to make up to a sweetheart. You're the first girl as refused to go arm in arm with me, ever since I was a boy o' thirteen and began a courting."

"But we are not courting, or else I should tell you that it is a foolish way of doing it, to compare me with your old sweethearts," said Evelyn, silyly.

"I wish as you cared about that, Eve; but you don't, so it's no use purtending," and the young man sighed in melodramatic

fashion. "But it was different along of t'other girls," he explained deprecatingly, "I wasna' in real earnest, Eve."

"Nor are you now," said Eve, smiling pleasantly on her lover; "and that is well—it would be of no use as you say, and it would be vexing if we were fancying ourselves in love, or anything stupid like that—we should never be such friends again."

Evelyn felt conscious that she had not hitherto been unwilling to receive Henry Delmar's attentions, and to be joked about him by her companions; but she had only fallen into the habit of encouraging him because every one else, except Charity, made a point of being seen escorted by a swain alongside the river on Sunday evenings after church, and most other nights, for the matter of that; but she was touched by her lover's evident devotion now, and, had it not been for the remembrance of the legacy, she might have acted differently. As it was, she determined to let him see the fruitlessness of

expecting a closer intimacy, than long acquaintanceship warranted.

"We have had a death in our family," she continued.

"Gracious me!" said Henry, adding awkwardly, "I didna' know—how could I guess that any trouble kept you from th' mill? I shouldna' have reproached you at such a time, Eve."

"You need not look so sorry, Henry. My countenance might speak for itself, to say nothing of my dress. No, Heaven be praised! Trouble and I are far apart—never further than to-day. It is an uncle, who I have never seen, and he has gone to a better world, I hope. He left Charity and me a legacy."

"A leg what, Eve?"

"Only some money, Henry; and that is why the factory and I have parted company."

"Is it much, Eve?"

"Yes, fifteen hundred pounds; but do

not mention it again, Charity might be vexed."

"Fifteen hundred atween you?" said her lover in amazement. "Why if I had but five hundred pounds, I would rent a shed, and start manufacturing on my own account. If it had only been left to me now; but no lucky stroke of fortune will come my roads I doubt. I say, Eve, if I could get some bricks and mortar together, and start a little business any time, would you object to such a chap for a husband?"

"I thought you were in fun all the time, Henry, the same as I was. I am not looking out for a husband. Why should I, with money to keep me like a lady?"

"Fifteen hundred pounds!" said Henry. "Well, that's a poser! And Evelyn, I reckon it's no use to stick up to you now? not as it ought to make any odds to a girl, if she likes a man well enough. Marriage service says for richer or for poorer, for better or for worse; but th' girls are all for better-

ing themselves. Talk about th' quality looking out for a fine match, it's pretty much the same in all stations. But I reckon you count yourself one of the quality now, Eve?" he added, ironically.

"We will not quarrel," said Evelyn; "it's not my way."

"D—n you and your way—it's a confounded sneaking one, that's all I have got to say about it. Where are you going, dressed out in all your Sunday finery?" he added, savagely.

"To see Mrs. Manory; and I am late, so you will excuse me if I refuse to listen to any more complimentary remarks. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye, Eve! Forget what I said—my mad temper it was," he said, sadly. "I don't blame you. Mrs. Manory has to answer for all your high-flown airs. Eve, girl, I have loved you! 'Appen better than any grand gentleman will ever do. There go, Eve, and I wish you well, notwithstanding all that's been atween us."

He stroked her hand regretfully, as he held it for a moment in his ; and looked wistfully and inquiringly into the girl's eyes.

“ Good-bye, once more ! ” said Eve, tremulously. “ I meant no harm all along.”

“ Likely not, Eve ; but you looked willing. Go your way, lass. You canna' mend matters now, for certain sure.”

So Evelyn bade farewell to her lover ; and one chain in the link that bound her to the old life was broken ; but there was less elasticity in her step ; and some misgivings in her heart about the future she had planned for herself ; and perhaps a little self-reproach for her conduct to Henry Delmar dimmed her first flush of happiness.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARITY'S MISGIVINGS.

WHEN Evelyn left the cottage, Charity had been busy with her usual daily work ; but no sooner was she alone than she emptied her tubs, drew a chair to the table, read the letter once again, and fell into an evidently troubled reverie, till, finally, resting her arms on the table and burying her face thereon, she wept convulsively.

Matthew found her in this state, and was surprised into more show of affection than usual. This self-contained, placid sister, who had borne up so bravely through trouble and care heretofore, to give way like this ! What could it mean ? He laid his rough hand on her bowed head, smoothing the hair tenderly, as he said soothingly, " Don't cry, Charity ! Look up, and give me your usual welcome ! What is the matter, poor lass ? I canna' do

without a bit of a greeting from sister Charity, when I come back tired and weary from work."

He had touched the right chord. Matthew must be considered; it would not do to give way now, and dinner spoiling too. She looked up with a painful effort at a smile, but Matthew's eyes suffused involuntarily as he met it.

"I have no business to be so foolish, Matthew; but I am a bit upset with some unusual—that is some good news. Oh, Matthew, let me be a moment," and Charity sobbed again. "It is Eve! We have lost her I fear. I saw how it would be as th' letter come; but when I thought it all over by myself, I couldna' quite bear it. She will go away from here, and make grand company for herself, and forget us, or if she comes back she will be changed towards us. Oh, mother, what would you think about it? If we had never come to Halkingham to be near Mrs. Manory! She has spoiled Eve."

"Hush, Charity! Don't rebel agen Providence! Do you think aught 'appens by chance?"

"No; but it's hard, Matthew, when my heart has been bound up in the girl. She is like the apple of my eye, Matthew," and Charity's tears still flowed. "Mrs. Manory was kind," she continued, "but if she meant to make a fine lady of Eve she ought to have taken her right away from us to begin with, then we should ha' got used to it."

"That's true, Charity," said Matthew. "I don't like such half-and-half work."

"But then, you see, Matthew, we have had Eve all these years, and she has been very loving and good. After all, there will be that to store i' one's memory," and Charity smiled, gratefully catching at straws of comfort.

"That's right, sister Charity, cheer up a bit, and tell me what freak Eve has got in her foolish head now."

"I forgot to tell you afore, Matthew. I and Eve are rich women. Uncle Abraham

has died and left us fifteen hundred pounds apiece, and there has been a letter from some lawyer living in London, to tell us. You look as if you didna' believe it, Matthew; but it's sober truth. Read th' letter, and you'll understand it all better nor me."

"You fairly daze a chap, Charity. Fifteen hundred pounds is a mighty lot! A flash o' lightning couldna' have startled me more. When one finds a wench weeping it isna' to be expected that she has had a fortune dropped into her lap."

Matthew read the letter deliberately, but not without excitement.

"It's right, sure enough, and I'm glad on't, Charity; but you've missed the postscript 'appen in your hurry. It says as Uncle Abraham left one son, but he cut him off with a shilling, as folks say, because he refused to be made a gentleman of. Only think what a stupid this cousin must be! I'm main sorry for him, and can scarcely see the rights of the case. But it is left to you two, Charity, and

you canna' help yourselves; and who knows whether the son is living or dead, or anything about him? I wish you luck, girl, and lots of new gowns, and health to tear 'em. You'll 'ave a power of lovers now, Charity, and Mr. Green hisself has looked sweet on you for some time agone. Mayhap he'll come forrard a step or two now. Well, well, wonders never cease! Few deserve good fortune as well, Charity; and you'll make a right use of the money, there's no fear o' that. As for Eve, she's a bit self-willed, and wants a tight hand kept over her."

"Don't say a word agen her now, Matthew, it breaks my heart."

"She is but young, Charity; and we must make her see things in our way."

Charity shook her head, saying, "She's a mind to go to school, Matthew."

"That's not a bad notion of her's neither, Charity. Education does no one no harm, and she'll have sense by time she's done her schooling."

"But don't you see, Matthew, I misdoubt me as Eve, being a scholar and a finished young lady like, she will set herself above us. What a poor, plain spoken, homely woman I shall seem to Eve, when she comes back!"

"Poor you canna' be, Charity, with such a sight of money; plain-spoken, well that may be to a polished ear; but to a wise 'un, 'in her tongue is the law of kindness.' As for homely, what can be better than th' word? Just a kindly, well-formed, industrious lass, that's what thou art! And if Eve should be shamed of such a sister, she isna' worthy to wear her cast-offs, and never a blessing will she gain from Matthew Joyce."

"You think too well of me, Matthew," interrupted Charity.

"Never a bit of it, Charity. But we'll have no glum faces to-day, with such luck afore us," he added coaxingly. "Where is Eve?"

"Gone to the Manory's. It's Eve's birthday, and she was asked up there for a treat."

"I minded me of it as I handled th' tools down yonder. I thought to bring her a bit of a gewgaw." And Matthew produced a pebble brooch out of his pocket. "However, Eve's had a better birthday present nor mine."

"She'll be none the worse pleased as you've minded about her though, Matthew. She was awful disappointed when I made purtence to ha' forgotten what day it was awhile ago. But you know, Matthew, she was a thought given to be vain, and I couldna' encourage her to look for a deal being made on her, same as grand folks find time to do."

"Well, Charity, you mustna' take on if Eve's a bit huppish. You've Matthew to fall back to at all times, and he's true as steel, though he's a bit sharp by times to marrer with it."

"You have the best heart in the world, Matthew, and I value you according; but a sister is a sister, and womankind of one's own kin is company like for one, and a sort of different towards what a man can be."

“ Well, I am not a going to dispute, because a woman sets up her own sect,” laughed Matthew.

“ One thing troubles me, Matthew,” said Charity. “ It is about the poor cousin left penniless. It is hard for *him*. And why should Eve and me be chosen? How did Uncle Abraham know whether we should use it well? And why didna’ he give it to you and Will?”

“ Never mind the why and the wherefore, Charity. Just be thankful about it, as I am. Men can work, and ’tis to their shame if they’re idle and good for nothing.”

“ There’s not many brothers as would say the same, Matthew. They’d be wanting a slice out of the pudding theirselves.”

“ Nay, nay, sister Charity, you didna’ ought to have such a bad ’pinion of th’ men.” After a few minutes’ thought, he continued, “ There’s such a thing as having a ’nuity, Charity; you give your money away, and you get back a certain sum yearly till you die.

Yon's a safe way, and no one can beg, borrow, or steal it from you. You two had best do't, and have no bother—it 'ill make you both a tidy thing; and if you spent from th' 'eap you'd 'appen make ducks and drakes of it. You with lending and giving; and Eve with her whims and 'stravagant notions."

"And who do you think of us two was the first to offer to share all with Will and you? Who but Eve, Matthew!" said Charity triumphantly.

CHAPTER V.

MAKING A LADY OF HER.

“ So Evelyn, they are going to make you into a lady, I hear, and send you to a boarding school, whose proprietor must guarantee to turn you out a finished young lady, in the shortest possible time. Do you know it strikes me very strongly that her work will be difficult. She will be beginning at the wrong end of the stick; and for you, my poor girl,” Mr. Manory added, not unkindly, “ it will be sorry work. You have no idea how disagreeable girls can be, if they have any suspicion that an associate is of more homely parentage than themselves. The hints and innuendoes that their aristocratic little tongues can utter so glibly; and that their intellectual little minds can condescend to construe for the benefit of their more

generous hearted juniors. Good heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Manory, reflectively, "it makes one shudder to think how influence is brought to bear upon the individuality of one's children! How all that is noble and generous is withered up in its birth! Bless me! In these days, by the time a girl is twelve years old, she knows as much about 'caste' as her grandmother; and the diplomacy of society is becoming the most interesting study of politics that she will ever know. Thank goodness, the boys are different! I trust the boys of England will long remain too manly to have the manners of fashionable life brought into the school-room—in fact the tendency of the age, as regards the training of boys, is to elevate mind and character. Self-help is not merely Smiles' text book; it is an influence that is making itself felt throughout the length and breadth of the land. But women will never acknowledge it—they are too narrow in their views, as a class. Well, after all, we would

not have you different, Midge," and he looked lovingly at his wife.

Midge was a pet name, which he had given his wife, in their young days, and which had been appropriate enough then ; but now, her habits and style were little in harmony with it. She had lost the sprightliness of youth, that semblance of busy midge-life ; her langour had increased with her bulk ; for she was now a stout, fair, lazy, good tempered matron ; fond of enjoyment after the fashion of such, but not energetic enough to be at much trouble to find it. She might suggest plans for amusements, leaving her husband to mature them, and see that they were successfully carried out.

Mr. Manory honoured her, after the manner of English gentlemen who marry their idols, and believe in them ever after ; otherwise, he might have ruled her with a rod of less power than the iron one of fable. She was, in fact, a woman to manage—one who any persistent person could use for his own ends if he so willed.

But she had never been subjected to such an attempt; she had dwelt at ease, and pleased herself. Even more than this; for if she had no mode of pleasing herself, her husband found it for her, sedulously promoted her pleasure, sought out fancies to gratify, and even manufactured them, as it were; making his wife interests in life which would have otherwise never disturbed her imagination.

It is pitiable to think what an inanity such a woman might become without a husband! We see people who have missed their life—their home life; the satisfaction of their heart's desire, who yet keep a brave face to the world; who strike out a line of their own, and make it their aim in life, and find happiness therein, so far as that can be co-existent with a wounded spirit. I am even inclined to think that the world owes much to these heavy-hearted ones—that great talent is seldom developed in the midst of domestic bliss—that it is the unsatisfied ones of the world, as a class, who toil most

arduously for its benefit, not so unselfishly perhaps as would appear to the short-sighted gaze of admiration, but for self-relief, battling against difficulties, overcoming, searching for more difficulties again, in that terrible spirit of unrest which misery alone knows. What a fearful blank it would be for such, if, like the sacred dove that soared from the ark of old, they found no rest for the sole of the foot; for alas! Where would such be, when, unlike the dove, they had no ark to fall back upon, no haven of still waters, no blessed family ties to solace the weary wayfarer?

However, Mrs. Manory would never have been in this plight. She would not have soared, but she would all the more mournfully, for that reason, have sunk into stupid insipidity, if her life's chance had been missed. Failing one way—the one be it remarked found for her by a prescient Providence—she was incapable of doing anything but to sit down to her fate. Such a woman would never do any great deed unassisted, if it lay

athwart her path; but there is a meek compliance which will occasionally accomplish as much as a resolute will. If there were no other kind of women in the world, not only would it be difficult to render novels amusing pictures of real life, but the world itself would be a miserably slow place to live in. Nevertheless there have been immense results from the influence of such women—from the unintentional bias that men have owed to them, so to speak—that is, to their love for, or jealousy about them.

It is true we frequently hear men say, in a slighting tone, "A pretty woman, but nothing in her." But how many times mayhap has the hearer's blood boiled within him, to think that, whether true or not, it has been said of the woman who is all the world to *him*?—the one who would make his earthly paradise—in whose placid, gentle demeanour he sees the ideal character he has cherished.

But to return to Mrs. Manory, she had been carefully preserved from any adverse

fate, and had been developed to the utmost her nature was capable of, by the husband who so passionately loved her, and judged her to be of some importance not only to himself but to the world at large.

The strong point of the character we have in our mind is its freedom from subtlety—not only its innocency of design itself, but an utter incapability to understand it in others—an ignorance of evil ; the purity arises less from principle than from an incapacity to analyze motives ; but, all the same, it is truly lovable and attractive. The sterner sex are captivated by such sweetness, perhaps the oftener that beauty is almost universally its ally. Perhaps, too, in their business life, they are in contact so constantly with meanness and wickedness, that the value of innocency of heart and mind is enhanced to them, and they seek to find it in home life, lest they lose faith in goodness, purity, virtue.

When we associate such qualities as these under the head of simplicity of mind, it is a

signification by no means despicable; and it is certainly of no conversational unimportance when words are heard which convey the speaker's whole meaning—when there is no dread of undercurrents of unfathomable artfulness. Surely such gracious dispositions are heaven sent, to preserve some happy homes amongst the many cheerless ones. And as this feminine character is so attractive to mankind, there is possibly small wonder that it has its counterfeit, which well nigh casts contempt upon the original—so hideous are such base attempts to cheat men's judgment. Is it a proof that the world has grown old and hardened, that it declines to be so readily deceived? Scarcely that—discrimination is a legitimate faculty of mind to be used on all occasions, and in all places—from the court of law, as the highest here, to that Supreme Court which has sanctioned men to “search” for their soul's life. If then the great things are to be determined by the eye of wisdom, the little

ones can but be exposed to the same critical vision.

Have we sufficiently excused our masculine friends for finding the style of women whom Mrs. Manory represents fascinating? And have we left our lady readers with no pangs of dissatisfaction with themselves for their worldliness, their suspicious nature, their own unamiable dispositions, or their uncharitable views of those of their neighbours? Have they no envy in their heart of that negative character we have been considering—no longing for that pliability, lacking power, it is true, but so graceful in the using, so seductive in its quiet influence, its freedom from self-assertion, and its restfulness?

How easily, we are tempted to think, such characters pass through life!—who servants rejoice to serve and friends to please. Yet, this purely receptive faculty is more to be admired, than the possession of it to be desired by those created with the nobler one of usefulness—the lot is fairly proportioned

to each if we but read the lesson of life aright.

But to come back from this disquisition to the matter of the moment. Mr. Manory had truly said that he preferred his wife to retain some of the formalities of her sex, and *that* because she was in danger of running into the other extreme, being inclined to make much of her inferiors, and to associate with them in preference to her equals, chiefly from laziness, as she could please them by her condescension with little effort.

In Evelyn Joyce, Mrs. Manory had become really interested, for, as we have seen, she had wished to make the girl an especial *protégée*, but Mr. Manory had pooh-poohed the notion, and his wife acquiesced with his wishes, and would have thought little more about the girl had not circumstances determined otherwise.

Mr. Manory was eminently just; and, knowing that Mrs. Joyce had been led to expect that Evelyn was to receive some

peculiar benefit from their removal to Hal-
kingham, he proposed that the little girl
should occasionally spend an afternoon at the
Laurels. Though he disapproved of the girl
being brought out of her own sphere in life,
he encouraged these visits as they pleased his
children, and he, being a kindly man, was
never anything but pleasant to the little
cottage girl on the rare occasions that she
crossed his path.

He did not foresee the consequences of
these visits, and he did not even know how
frequently they recurred; far less did he
imagine that the ambitious little girl had felt
the first yearning for a higher estate at the
Laurels.

Evelyn Joyce had listened to Mr. Manory's
remarks about school life with some surprise
—that there should be any question of her
kindly reception by her schoolfellows was a
new idea to her. But she had had her
factory experience; and, knowing how the
girls there had looked askance at her in the

first place, from the very different reason that Evelyn was superior to them, she could well imagine other girls being intolerant of one who was their inferior.

Unbidden, there came to Evelyn's mind, the dread of the impression that Matthew might make upon them if he should be known to be her natural guardian and brother. Instinctively Evelyn felt that even Charity, with her coarse hands and provincial speech, would be little approved of in such a *côterie* as Mr. Manory described.

With a pang at her heart, she resolved to obtain their solemn promise not to visit her at the school. She calculated even whether it would not be well to keep silent about her relatives. Surely, if she were a girl thrown amongst strangers, without any home friends, the difficulty would be met, and her position amongst them assured. Alas! she had not learnt the bitter truth that a "nobody" never has friends. The very fact of not talking about her relatives would be suspicious.

Girls at school might find it more satisfactory to receive a "nobody" *without* the unfortunate relatives; but the larger world outside the school gates would be more difficult to manage.

Poor Evelyn! Already her moral nature was bearing the woful fruits of prosperity! She felt more and more uncomfortable as she fostered such thoughts. More and more ashamed of herself, and still more ashamed of her origin and connections. But she was resolved to attain her end at any sacrifice. On the whole, she did not feel much discouraged by the prospect Mr. Manory held before her eyes. She was far less ignorant than he was aware of, having profited by the instructions of her playmates at the Laurels, as we have before observed, and it had been arranged between herself and the young ladies that a few months of private instruction would be necessary before going to school. The rudiments of music must be mastered, and sufficient mechanical skill attained to play an

accompaniment easily. She had been carefully trained in singing by a musical rector, who prided himself on the efficiency of his choir, of which Evelyn was a member ; and, having a powerful contralto voice, her services had more than once been called into requisition by Maude and Minnie Manory, to take part with them in duets and trios which their light sopranos could not render effectively without a richer voice. She had been told by them that her voice was of rare quality. Often and often they had expressed a wish to "rob her of her voice," and now it was to be turned to the best possible account.

A few months' hard work had been planned for Evelyn Joyce by these good-natured young patronesses, to whom this little scheme for their humble friend's advancement was a romance in real life. Music, they told her, she need never hope to master at her time of life, without that especial talent which she lacked ; for, despite their symmetry, her hands were awkward on the keys. No

matter—so long as she were not ignorant of music, proficiency was immaterial. Evelyn had always been awkward at manual work. Charity had vainly endeavoured to mould those hands into practical housewifery. Her fingers the factory girls had sneered at, and called “bungling”; and though they were slender and almond-shaped, they were useless enough compared with those thick knuckled, red, and broad-tipped fingers, with the squarely-cut nails, rejoiced in by the other girls. Her heart had never been in her work to prompt the slow hands; and it was to be feared the music would suffer from the same cause.

But Evelyn had a clever head, as Charity had often consoled herself by remembering. “A clear head, Matthew, and a loving heart, if a bit thoughtless,” she would say proudly.

Even in music Evelyn had this chance—her head might do what her hands could not; she might study counterpoint and harmony,

and he an excellent critic, though her mechanical skill were deficient.

Surely she deserved to succeed, if all the weary hours of the day were to be devoted to the study of the various grammars and histories recommended—and some knowledge of French was necessary, as well as an accurate acquaintanceship with the three popular rudimental R's.

Evelyn was sufficiently versed in these latter branches ; and during these few months of preparation, she was wise enough to devote her energies solely to the acquirement of music and French.

At the expiration of this term, Evelyn was pronounced by her self-assumed judges, the Manorys, to be sufficiently advanced for an ordinary specimen of a backward school-girl.

Poor Evelyn ! to her it seemed meagre praise and a sorry reward for such incessant toil. Maude Manory suggested that she should adopt the *rôle* of a delicate girl, whose

education had for that reason been neglected.

“You remember, Minnie,” she said, “when Madge Cunningham was at school, she was as backward as Evelyn, and quite as old; she had a consumptive tendency, and till she was quite grown up the doctor forbade any exertion, more especially mental application. She became so stupid that her mamma found she must go to school, and be with girls of her own age, to bring her out a little before she was introduced.”

“I am sure Evelyn is a thousand times cleverer than Madge Cunningham, Maude,” retorted her warmer-hearted sister, “and far nicer, although Madge’s grandmother is Lady Paerin, and Evelyn is only—”

Minnie stopped short of the revelation of Evelyn’s ancestry; but the latter, with natural candour, supplied the omission.

“Thank you, dear Miss Minnie, for your good opinion of a poor factory girl. I am not ashamed to talk to you about it, but I

should be very sorry to be snubbed by others for my misfortune, as would be the case, Mr. Manory says, at school. But I will never tell anybody, and they will not find it out, will they?"

"Not easily," replied Minnie, "but girls are awfully inquisitive. Perhaps it is best to say nothing about it," she added, doubtfully; "but deception is not very honourable, you know, Evelyn."

"I know that so well," sighed Evelyn, "but what can I do, if people are so unkind and ungenerous—so unlike you and Miss Maude, whose opinion would be the same of a school-fellow even if you knew her to be of humble station?"

Minnie winced at the remark, and said, shrugging her shoulders, "Of course I should think the same of you, dear little goosey; but I might be much the same as other girls, had I not known you and liked you all my life. You are so sensible, Evelyn, that you will know best what to say about yourself to

the girls ; but, remember, you must not blame us if you get into a scrape. I don't advise deceit—it is your own idea. I have no notion of being responsible for other people's sins, having plenty of my own to burden me.”

But Minnie laughed merrily, and succeeded in producing upon Evelyn the impression that though her plan was wrong, and Minnie had a clear perception of right and wrong, she was willing enough to look upon it as an excusable peccadillo on Evelyn's part.

And, being a sharp girl, Evelyn knew that Mrs. Manory, and in some degree Mr. Manory too, gave their countenance to deception. Mr. Manory was inclined to admire her as a girl of sense and discrimination—one to push her way in the world—although he would never have held out his little finger to produce such a result in Evelyn's childhood.

Mrs. Manory had exerted herself unusually in arranging terms for the girl's reception in an excellent school, whose proprietor she had formerly known, and she had arranged that

there should be no holidays. Mr. Manory himself had suggested that "if the girl really meant it, the way to do the thing was to keep her away entirely, for a good long period, from her old associates." Thus they had all, in some sort encouraged the girl.

CHAPTER VI.

LAUNCHED ON THE WORLD.

EVELYN'S resolve was not so easily accepted at her cottage home. Matthew gave his opinion of her with sternness. From the height of his moral rectitude, he looked down upon Evelyn's mean parley with conscience as utterly despicable.

“I am 'shamed of you, lass—disappointed, vexed, angered, all and each; and I say as you're going fast to the evil one. Have neither Charity nor me taught you better nor that? Do you think as how you are doing your duty to God and your neighbour, to say nought of me nor Charity, towards which it might be expected as you'd show a bit of grateful feeling for minding you when you was a youngster? Charity and me not to come to the school and see a grand lady, for-

sooth ! Do you think it likely as we should want to set eyes on you hever agen ? ”

“ You know, Matthew, that I would not ask such a thing, only it is best ! ” said Evelyn, weeping. “ It is only for a short time.”

“ Time is nought,” interrupted Matthew, gruffly, “ but character is heverything.” He made free use of the letter H in his emphatic anger. “ What do you reckon on finding more comfortable in life than respect ? Self-respect and one’s neighbours’ approval ; aye, and,” added Matthew, reverently, “ God’s guidance. There is a Eye that will watch you for hever—no hiding nothing from Him, Eve. If you mind no other warning of mine, bear this about with you : Providence canna’ be cheated. Good-bye, Eve, my girl ; I’m too vexed agen you to say a kind word ; and it seems mockery like to wish you God speed ; but I have loved you lass, since you werena’ higher than th’ table.”

Matthew’s voice was pathetic in its emotion,

as he rubbed his rough hand across his eyes and then shook his heavy figure, as if impatiently disdainful of his own weakness.

So he walked off to his workshop; and Evelyn cried out in bitterness, "Matthew!" and stretched her hands yearningly towards his retreating form; for Evelyn was to leave home that day, and Will had already parted from her with a careless word of disapproval.

"Good-bye, Eve," he had said. "If I never see you again, you may perhaps remember me in your will. Charity told me 'bout your make believe generosity—that you meant to share with brother Will. 'Appen if you have a shilling left at th' last you'll mind of me. I reckon you may like to know that Bessie Smith is going to take me for better or worse sometime next month; and that we are t' emigrate, as Bessie thinks as I shall be a ne'er-do-well all my life hereabouts, and that fresh places and faces and th' rest of it will be less temptation. Charity has lent me a trifle to start with, and 'appen we may

succeed same as Uncle Abraham afore us. Will you be 'shamed of your rich brother and his partner then, Eve?"

"Hush, Will!" said Eve, as her tears fell silently and softly, "I am glad Bessie has made up her mind at last, and I wish you happiness, Will, and I shall think of you ever so much, always. And, Will, you are all too good for me—it isn't that—you are all of you, even ne'er-do-well Will, as Matthew sometimes calls you, better than I am. But, somehow, I have always wanted to be a lady, and now it has gone so far, it is too late to go back," said Eve, in a faltering tone.

If Matthew had heard this confession, how different it might have been; but Will, too full of his own hopes to heed about Evelyn overmuch, said carelessly—

"It's never too late to mend, they say; but we are a bad lot, both on us, and not fit to be named in th' same breath as Matthew nor Charity. Good old Matthew," exclaimed Will, with some compunction in his tone.

For had he not robbed Matthew of Bessie, besides vexing him in a thousand little ways more irritating to a man of Matthew's noble, self-relinquishing disposition, than his rivalry?

"Well, Eve," Will continued, after a pause, "it will be no use to ask you to see us married—you will be over busy, I reckon?"

"Oh Will," said Eve bitterly, "not too busy for that. But I shall be too far off to come. My heart will be with you."

"Pooh pooh!" said Will, "don't be a soft wench!"

But he was touched by Evelyn's tone, nevertheless, and continued, "Marriages are 'appening most days, and folks think mighty little of 'em, always excepting th' happy couple theirselves."

He looked sheepish, in anticipation of his marital position, and added, "It's no use to fool th' time away, talking about things; so good luck to you Eve!—we've both th' world afore us."

A gay wave of the hand, which seemed to embrace that boundless future to be so successfully employed, and Will was gone.

But the parting that was most trying was yet to come. Charity had breakfasted with them in silence, and had gone about her work as usual ; but Evelyn knew by the glistening eye and the firmly closed mouth, that Charity was keeping guard over herself.

Patiently she waited till Matthew had had his say and Will had departed—waited to have Evelyn all to herself for that last half hour, before they should walk together to the station across the green, as it is still called, though destitute of its primeval verdancy.

Then Charity came and sat down by Evelyn in their mutual bedroom. The latter had already donned her travelling dress—a far more elegant one than she had yet ventured to wear. She made a pretence of washing her hands, and secretly stowed away in her pocket a pair of grey kid gloves.

Not that gloves were an unusual luxury,

but Charity always wore thread ones; and Evelyn, rendered sensitive by the previous conversations with Will and Matthew, resolved to reserve her kid gloves till she was fairly *en route*, and her friends left behind in the dim distance.

Evelyn was to travel alone—to launch herself upon this new life—to enter the presence of her school-fellows, her preceptress, and the minor teachers alone.

This did not seem a singular arrangement, as the journey was long, and Mrs. Delamere had written to say that other young ladies would travel by the same line of rail, who Miss Joyce might join, and so feel the journey less lonely and safer.

And so it was that at a certain junction, at a fixed hour, Miss Joyce was to find one of the teachers on the platform, who would be ready to render her any assistance in travelling she required.

Have you ever felt, as well as pain, the awkwardness of parting? Have you been

anxious to break the silence, while the precious moments were fleeting, and felt tongue-tied? Have you yearned to make known your love and tenderness, your good feeling, your kind wishes, your disapprobation being resolutely suppressed meanwhile, that you might assure the loved one that under any circumstances—through all, and everything—you will be loving and faithful?

So Charity felt now. But it was Eve who first broke the silence. She flung herself on Charity's neck in an agony of love and remorse.

"Oh, dear, dear, Charity! Kind sister, forgive me! Do not cast me off! Though I deserve that you should think badly of me, oh, Charity, you will not? Not *you*, Charity! I have received it from the others; but *your* contempt I could never bear. Remember me, Charity, as the little Eve whom you nursed, and forget this larger, worse Evelyn, who is leaving you for such a long dreary time. But it will soon go, will it not, Charity?" said the girl piteously.

"I hope so, dear," Charity replied, trying to be calm and compose Evelyn.

Charity was very matter-of-fact at all times, and she did not wish Evelyn to go away with red eyes and disarranged dress, after all the trouble and expense her toilet had caused.

"Listen to me, Eve. You may go away and forget *me*—I only say you *may*—you have a right to forget folks if you can," Charity continued, in a broken voice. "I think this parting is but a start; you may 'appen like been away from us better nor you think now. Don't cry, dear; only bethink yourself, if th' time comes, that whatever you may do, even if 'tis wrong and wicked, I can never forget to love my little Eve. And write to me now and again, Eve. I will try to like all th' new folks you tell of, and I will think of you as my own dear sister, who has gone a bit out of the path that Providence set for her; but, Eve, the path is allers open to walk in again, and

Charity at th' beginning of it to help you as she did when your little feet first stepped across th' cottage floor. See, Eve, I bought you this bit of Prayer Book, dear, to mind you of me and your dooty. I am not preaching, Eve; but you'll maybe as lief ha' this as any other keepsake."

"Oh, Charity, why am I not like you? Why was I born with such wicked wishes, to be a curse to me?"

"Hush, Eve! That is wrong; Matthew and I would have you think different of things. But you are but a young lass, you will alter. Yes, Eve, I have faith in God, and you'll come back some day our own pure, innocent Eve again. God grant that th' trial may not be a fiery one!"

Charity's head had been bowed reverently as she uttered the last words, and when she raised it she spoke in her usual cheerful tone.

"It is late, Eve; we must go now. I will carry th' umbrella."

“No, Charity, don’t,” said Eve.

“Let me, Eve! It will be some’at to do for you, and I love you so, Eve.”

Charity moaned, taking at the same time the umbrella compulsorily from her, and grasping it as if she would retain her hold upon her sister’s belongings for ever.

CHAPTER VII.

THE THIN END OF THE WEDGE.

EVELYN'S usual good fortune followed her from Halkingham. She was as great a favourite at school as she had been with the mill hands. It was a compliment to her natural personal graces, and her quietness and tact, that her companions failed to discover her birth and breeding.

Perhaps the more subtle mind of the principal—experienced as she had become during long tuition in reading the character and discovering the faults and foibles of the disposition and manners of her pupils—had discerned some deficiency in Evelyn. But she was a wise woman, not prone to favouritism, and dealt justly, and impartially with those placed under her care. She made it compulsory for all under her roof to exercise politeness one to another. Whatever her

suspensions may have been regarding Evelyn, she took care to allow none of them outward manifestation. She was perhaps more reserved with her than with some of her pupils, and made few enquiries about the welfare of her relatives.

Mrs. Delamere was very popular amongst her young ladies; she had a pleasant word for each as she distributed the letters at breakfast; she would express some hope that their news was agreeable; ask of one had her mamma's health improved, of another when her sister's marriage would take place or how the brothers liked Eton.

In short, there were few of the young ladies in whose private affairs Mrs. Delamere did not show some interest—few of the families represented in her establishment which she had not visited or been asked to visit—and very few of which she did not know its social standing.

Possibly, had Mrs. Delamere been enlightened about Evelyn's connections, she

would have declined to receive her new pupil. She might have explained that it would be injurious to her school, which had always a character for respectability, to receive Miss Joyce, as parents would no longer be sure of their daughters having proper associates there.

No doubt it was wise of Mrs. Delamere to fill up her vacancy—to take Evelyn upon trust, and make no dangerously friendly advances to the doubtful pupil. But she was never unkind to her, as some would have been.

Mrs. Delamere was in her right place ; she was eminently calculated to have the management of a school. She had no reason to dislike Evelyn ; in fact, rather the contrary, as she was obliging, good-tempered, and an apt scholar, and she contrived to give Evelyn work out of class rather than expose the girl to the mortification of having her ignorance observed by girls younger than herself. But partiality in one's affections and likings is

natural ; and it is but fair to Mrs. Delamere to own, that though teacher like, her temperament had become less impulsive and colder, in proportion as it were to a forced exercise of judgment, she had certain pupils whose disposition she considered unlovable, and whose character she despised.

But Mrs. Delamere would not exercise any petty cruelty, such as imposing objectionable tasks for slight offences, or withholding enjoyment from even a refractory pupil, with any motive influencing her conduct less worthy than the girl's own welfare.

Under such a ruler, Evelyn's life was divested of many thorns. She had sprung from a class whose sensitiveness is not generally extreme ; and she was, no doubt, more obtuse in recognising an intended slight than she might have been, so that the little disagreeables of school life passed from her as lightly and as completely as the dew falls from a rose.

There were girls who wearied her with

their inquisitiveness, and Evelyn would parley with these, and parry their homethrusts effectually, but not without deceitfulness. This was painful to Evelyn, whose uncontaminated nature was not alien to truth.

But the more subtle attacks upon her were undefended, unheeded, even unobserved.

And Evelyn made good progress as the time passed, and the term of her exile from Halkingham drew to a close.

Mrs. Delamere had an informal reception every month, to entertain her friends, and for the more definite purpose of introducing her older pupils, so that they might lose some shyness and awkwardness before leaving her care; and Evelyn was much noticed on these occasions, her appearance was striking and her singing uncommon, and many were the eye-glasses raised to observe her, and numerous the questions Mrs. Delamere had to answer about her.

“Who is that elegant creature?” would

be asked again and again, with always the same indifferent answer.

“ Her name is Joyce—from the North, I believe. Recommended by a friend to my school. I know very little about the girl. Nice looking ! Yes, I suppose so.”

But a lady more persistent than the rest, one evening pressed Mrs. Delamere with unusual questions.

“ Is she one of the Cumberland Joyces ? ”

“ I really do not know,” replied Mrs. Delamere. “ She came to me from Halkingham—a new place not much known—its exact geographical situation I am unable to define, but it is on the Great Northern line. Not interested in her ? Yes, of course I am ! All my dear pupils have a right to my interest ; but she is a reserved girl.”

“ What a pity, Mrs. Delamere ! You are very good to your pupils, we all know ; but then no one can help liking some girls better than others.”

“ I never allow myself the privilege of

partiality," said Mrs. Delamere gravely, a little displeased that the visitor should have been led by her remarks to suppose Evelyn was not held in the highest esteem.

"Oh, no, it would not do, Mrs. Delamere," was the reply the speaker made, smiling and nodding mysteriously meanwhile, and adding, after a moment's reflection—

"That girl is wonderfully like Lady Zephyr — Joyce — Joyce? Scotch perhaps?"

"I do not think Miss Joyce is particularly aristocratic," said Mrs. Delamere coldly, unwilling to leave a false impression on her guest's mind. "The reference was highly respectable—I always make a point about that—but it did not come from any family of note; though I believe the Manorys have not always been in trade, and that, on the wife's side, there are some very good connections—manufacturers they are now," and Mrs. Delamere lowered her voice in giving the information, lest any of her pupils should

understand that one of them was being discussed so freely.

"Miss Joyce is clever—too clever, I should say," and the tone, some way, conveyed to Mrs. Delamere's guest the idea that Miss Joyce was less to be admired in mind than person.

"She looks pleasant and quite artless, at all events," the lady said, determined not to be suppressed in her admiration of Evelyn by Mrs. Delamere, and concluding, in her own mind, that the latter was prejudiced against her handsome pupil. "I have not seen such self-possession and unconscious grace in a girl so young for an age."

As she spoke, Miss Arlington moved away from her hostess, and invited, by a smile, the approach of a girl who stood near Evelyn.

"Now, Fay," she inquired, "who is your friend? I cannot get it out of Mrs. Delamere."

Fay was a niece of Miss Arlington—a bright-looking girl of the brunette type, small featured, and dark skinned; she had

small, grey eyes, but they sparkled with mirth and mischief; she was low-browed, and dull-complexioned—not pretty certainly; but it was a face that would interest you; when sober, a trustful, honest gaze met yours, but, as a rule, a saucy retort was seen upon the countenance before the lips uttered a word. You would assume that she possessed an average intelligence, though no superficial one—a kind that understood itself, so far as it went—that knew what it believed, and held to its creed, though that might be a limited one, and probably very unorthodox.

“Do you mean Evelyn Joyce,” said Fay.
“She is my very great friend.”

“But who is she?” urged her inquisitor.

“What do you mean, aunt?” replied Fay, with her small eyes opened to their utmost extent, in a comical attempt to grasp her enquirer’s object.

“You know well enough, Miss Fay, so do not profess to be such a laggard in worldly wisdom.”

"Well," said Fay, mischievously, "perhaps I do know. She is the dearest, cleverest, most ambitious, persevering, and calmly affectionate creature in the school—quite a study, in fact, and therefore more than interesting."

"So far so good ; but, my dear Fay, is she a proper companion for you ? Do you—be a good girl, Fay, and be serious—do you think your mother would approve, and your cousin Arlington ?"

"About mamma, I am positive ; she is like myself, a little Bohemian in her tastes ; and we like the thing, you know, aunt," said Fay, teasingly. "As for the Honourable Sir Archibald Fane Arlington, he may look down upon me as much as he likes from the height of his superior greatness ; I don't mind. I cannot endure Arlington, and I shall pay him off for his conceited pretensions before long. I will never marry him, though it has been settled between our dead fathers, I know," said Fay, defiantly ; "but I don't

recollect mine, and I am sure I should have no deferential recollection of Arlington's, had I been old enough to have personal acquaintance with him before his death. As for Archibald pretending to preach to me about my duty to my pedigree, and such rubbish as that, he may do so and welcome, but he must not expect me to listen; and if he wants my opinion of him, it is given in three words—he's half crazed, aunt!"

"Fay, you are worse than ever," replied Miss Arlington, in a displeased tone. "How can you apply such words to the head of the family? A little chit of a child like you, too! I fear Mrs. Delamere has failed in her duty."

"Now, aunt," said Fay, coaxingly, "don't let us quarrel; you and I always get on together, and you would rather have me than a dozen Archibalds, only you want me to marry him, which nonsense, you see, I cannot consent to. As if papa had not left me quite enough fortune to satisfy my modest requirements," continued Fay, pertly.

"But it is a good match, Fay, and some day you will begin to consider that to be all-important," said her aunt.

"I never shall, aunt;" and as if to dismiss the subject from her mind at once and for ever, she changed it. "Evelyn is just the girl you would like, aunt; she is rather a politic girl, but, between you and me, she is not quite one of us; her manner is pretty well, but sometimes there comes out the natural self—the least suspicion of some quondam vulgarity of speech which she has outgrown, and she does not seem to know the O. K. thing."

"Fay, I am surprised at you! Where do you get your slang? And how can *you* judge of vulgarity, when you use such odiously low words yourself?"

"Hush, aunty dear; Mrs. Delamere would be so cross; and I never said it before, and scarcely knew I had heard it; but I wanted to tease you."

"And that you consider an edifying oc-

cupation, Fay?" said her aunt, only half appeased. "This comes of unfitting associates; really Mrs. Delamere should be careful whom she receives into the school."

"Do hush, there's a dear beautiful aunt," said Fay, imploringly; "Evelyn will hear; and I want you to speak to her and sanction our friendship. She is such fun! I mean it is nice to have a friend who does not reveal herself. All the girls talk, till you are bored, about their sickly mamma's; their infallible brothers; and their strict papa's—family records are hateful! And here is a girl who has nothing to talk about except the present; and it is quite glorious to imagine where her thoughts are, and what dear friend's memory is bringing the dewy softness to her sweet blue eyes. I do believe she has made some sacrifice—has relinquished home and friends for some benevolent object—that she is exercising some self-denial, I can guess, from her thoughtfulness at times; but she is generally very merry, aunt—in fact, quite an anomaly.

And, aunt, you will like her! She always does the wisest thing; she will not displease Mrs. Delamere, just because she is the commander-in-chief. I beg your pardon, aunt, it was only a slip of the tongue; but Mrs. Delamere does not seem to care for Evelyn, though she tries constantly to please her. That is Evelyn's way, she will never vex anybody, but she does what she likes best, all the same, though she does contrive to keep in with everybody. Quite a good companion for your rash niece, you see, aunt. She would advise me prudently—perhaps even speak in favour of Arlington," added Fay, mischievously, using the argument most calculated to make an impression on Miss Arlington.

Evelyn's behaviour did the rest, for, unlike Fay, she had a natural reverence for age, and she had been accustomed to admire and show homage to ladies from her childhood; in her inferiority, she had ever exaggerated the importance of station; unlike her radical

brother Will, who recognised no superior ; or straightforward, honest Matthew, who valued a man or woman according to his or her moral worth, and stood boldly before his betters from right worthy independence, being in no way uncivil, but conscious, like the poet Burns, that "rank is but the guinea's stamp, a man's a man for a' that."

Evelyn had been a silly little flatterer in her manner to the "gentlefolk," since she was the height of a table ; nor was it merely manner ; for, with all her worldly soul, she worshipped the greatness of a family name ; and, with all that was softer and nobler in her nature, she humbled herself in the presence of age.

Miss Arlington was taken by her pretty, unconscious deference, and inwardly wondered what the girl found attractive in her wizened face and formal manner ; for she too was humble, this old lady, who had once been jilted by the object of her affections ; and whose disappointment, unlike the usual re-

sult, had somewhat softened the more rugged features of her character.

Miss Arlington had some discrimination, and would have discovered at once if Evelyn had fawned upon her from some interested motive. But it was not so ; so far as it went, Evelyn's homage was natural. But Miss Arlington failed to discover its origin ; she thought there was something purely personal in it, and she was gratified.

Fay certainly had a flippancy of speech, and mode of thought, which her aunt highly disapproved of. Now here was a companion who would improve her ; perhaps even teach her to respect her affectionate aunt ; or, better still, she might induce Fay to accept the head of the family, with his baronetcy, and his pride ; and—that which Miss Arlington always kept to herself, in her inmost heart—his feeble mind.

Miss Arlington, planning this useful friendship, thought herself wiser than the little niece who read her like a book, and wheedled

anything out of the old lady she set her heart upon; but Miss Arlington did not quite understand how a set purpose is often concealed beneath a careless manner. Only Fay quite knew herself.

"She thinks I am settled for life now," said Fay, to herself; "and Evelyn will have miles of expediency to detail to me second-hand. All the same, I shall have Evelyn's company, and I like her! Heigh-ho! I am not very exacting as to the principles of my favourites, I fear—respect is unnecessary in my estimate of them; but admiration *must* be an ingredient. I can admire her beauty, her temper, in some degree, her disposition, for she is both sweet and affectionate. After that, she is clever—"

Fay sighed, a sigh as impressive as Mrs. Delamere's emphasis on the same word a while ago.

"One cannot have perfection, and dear me! *That* is always so dull. Imperfection is more interesting to most people, and to me it is—I had nearly said perfection, but that would

not be exactly logical, though indeed imperfection is entirely satisfactory to me. But with all her sophistications, I respect Aunt Arlington infinitely more than my chosen friend, Evelyn Joyce."

As Fay soliloquised, Miss Arlington and her companion were mutually well pleased. Miss Arlington praised her niece; and she saw that no petty jealousy possessed Evelyn's mind—truly and completely Evelyn admired Fay Arlington, and genuine affection towards her was expressed upon her changing countenance.

When Miss Arlington "hoped the intimacy would continue," Evelyn's eyes sparkled with an eagerness she did not try to conceal; and when Miss Arlington further remarked, "that Fay being an only child felt lonely at home; and that she was sure Mrs. Arlington would be delighted, if Evelyn would gratify her daughter by making a long visit to her, as soon as Fay left school," Evelyn's heart beat high with hope.

Miss Arlington explained, with great kindness, that Fay's home life was monotonous, and that Evelyn's visit would make the separation from so many dear companions less sad.

Poor Evelyn ! Here was an unexpected opening for her ! With all her determination to be a lady, there was very little talent for scheming developed at present in Evelyn Joyce. She had never had any ulterior motive in her friendship for Fay.

Though, to a practical eye, here was the very girl who would be likely to prove a true friend, and overlook all difference of caste, Evelyn had not discovered it. It had been quite natural to like Fay ; and Fay, and her aunt were not slow to recognise this. The mixture of simplicity, candour, plausibility, and cunning which constituted Evelyn's character, when contrasted with her light-heartedness, sweet temper, and affectionate nature, made her a very interesting study to Fay.

“ If she had been brought up as I have, with my unusual disadvantages, that is having my own way constantly, and being the important personage of the household, Evelyn might have turned out a very ordinary girl,” said Fay to herself, with some secret pride that she, Fay Arlington, had, notwithstanding these drawbacks, preserved her originality ; for she felt rather gratified to imagine the difference that the change in their respective positions might have made to each.

It was surprising what a correct knowledge of Evelyn’s character Fay had.

Evelyn never talked about Charity, nor Matthew, nor Will, but she had mentioned the Manorys, and the old tone of respect was discernible, which Fay had been quick enough to note. She half guessed that Evelyn was a kind of *protégée* of these “ good people ”—so Fay was in the habit of styling anybody connected with trade, and Evelyn had disputed the doubtful term.

“ Good people ! ” said Evelyn. “ Yes,

they are pretty well ; they go to church every Sunday, and they are very kind to the poor."

"Oh, you dear thing !" said Fay, laughing. "And you think these Manorys, with their wealth, and church-going, and soup-giving, and—and—endless good qualities, very grand personages, I see, Evelyn."

"They are very good to me—very fond of me that is," added Evelyn, to avoid giving the impression of that patronage which Fay had already guessed.

Sometimes she was rather provoked with Evelyn, for Fay had a fiery little spirit, and felt, at these moments, that she would like to shake the truth out of her.

In a more rational mood, Fay would return to her allegiance, and be impressed with the conviction that it would be folly to disenchant the princess, and she would fall back upon her study of this complicated nature, when her heart was dissatisfied with her friend.

Evelyn was entirely taken by surprise when Miss Arlington proposed a visit to Fay's home; she was full of triumphant glee, and satisfaction with her own success—her success in becoming a lady, "for Miss Arlington never imagines I am anything else," thought Evelyn, with a regretful wish that she was not obliged to seem what she was not, or that she was not in reality what she seemed.

It had come to this—the consequence of error. At first Evelyn had resolved to deceive; now she felt herself *compelled*; later it would be a natural habit.

Evelyn had actually, till now, been contemplating a speedy and happy meeting with Charity, but she gave that up on the spot, without compunction, for the chance of a visit to Fay.

"What will Maude and Minnie Manory think?" she said to herself. "There is a village called Arlington, and a park, and a grand house, where the baronet lives, and Arling-

ton Lodge, about three miles away, where Fay's mother lives, and which has always been assigned to the younger brother, Fay says, unless he promotes himself by marriage. Only think what grand people I shall be with at last, Charity ! ”

Evelyn nearly committed the error of thinking aloud in her excitement, and Miss Arlington, as she glanced at her flushed face, repeated the word. Charity in surprise at the girl's awkward reception of her overtures.

“ A charity to visit Fay, my dear ? ” said Miss Arlington stiffly. “ I hardly know, but she will like to have you no doubt.”

“ I did not mean that,” said Evelyn in confusion. “ I was only thinking about Charity, some one called Charity.”

“ Good gracious ! What an outlandish name ! Who *can* be the owner of such a very suggestive title, Evelyn ? ” said Fay, drawing near to hear what she might of the conversation between her aunt and friend.

Evelyn drew a long breath before replying—

“She is somebody very nice—at least we all think so,” she added constrainedly.

But Fay was too afraid of Miss Arlington hearing more to continue the subject, and Miss Arlington noticed that Evelyn looked uncomfortable, and said kindly—

“I beg your pardon, my dear, for misunderstanding you, but we will not be rude enough to engross each other longer, or our friends will malign us. I shall write to your mamma, Fay, and perhaps Miss Joyce will hear something from her before the school breaks up.”

CHAPTER VIII.

A COTTAGE FIRESIDE.

CHARITY JOYCE had been more contented during Evelyn's absence than she had expected to be. She missed her considerably, but Evelyn was a good correspondent, and her letters had been very loving and pleasant. The tone of them had never altered, and there appeared to be no diminution of interest in home affairs on Evelyn's part, and Charity now hoped that the girl would return, and live amongst them once more, with no worse result of her ambition to become a lady than her two years' schooling.

How considerate Charity meant to be to her ! How many little concessions she would make to the girl's pride !

"I will give up the washing," Charity thought, "though I shall be lost without it. Eve and I will manage to be very comfort-

able, thanks to Uncle Abram, and I will read the papers as Matthew brings in a bit, so as to be better company for her ; and it would do no harm to improve myself in writing and summing, so that Eve may not be 'shamed of me.'

Already she had transformed her usual laundry room into a best parlour ; a neat paper had been hung upon the wall by Matthew, and both he and Charity had done their utmost to improve the little cottage home for their truant sister.

Matthew was as eager to please Evelyn as Charity, and, strange to say, not one word of reproof, not an animadversion of any kind, had he uttered against Evelyn in her absence.

Charity thought he was growing softer hearted with the passing years ; she missed the grumbling tone she had been wont to censure. Since Will had left home, the little daily irritations which the younger brother and sister had made for him had ceased, and

Matthew had unbounded toleration in great things.

In the main, he was willing to give every one a good word, but, like many another great hearted man, he could not bear up against small domestic grievances. The little differences of opinion which will constantly manifest themselves in a family were trying to Matthew, for, with all his goodness, he was very apt to think his own way best, and his own judgment infallible.

When he had time for thought, he was willing to make allowances for others' failings; he was a merciful judge, when he had considered both sides of the case, but the unfortunate thing was that, at home, the surface humour was mostly visible, the one-sided view apparent.

Since Bessie and Will had gone, things had resolved themselves, as it were; there was no need for decision. Evelyn had gone her own way, and Will had gone his, and Bessie had sought her happiness with Will

instead of Matthew, and Matthew could help none of these things ; uncertainty was over, and he settled himself down with infinitely less of that grumbling spirit that he had vexed Charity by displaying so freely when his influence might have been of any use.

There is a great deal of discontent in the world from a prescience of evil results following certain actions which we feel ourselves unable to prevent. Perhaps more grumbling arises from vexation at our own inability than anything else—from our impotency to resist circumstances—our unfitness to perform an action—our own rebellion against fate.

So long as there is a chance of changing it, we grumble ; when it is settled, and beyond our interference, we resign ourselves. So it was with Matthew ; and now resignation brought not only comfort to himself and others, but all the nobility of his character unfolded itself, and his patience and love were extended to poor Evelyn.

Oh, what did not the girl recklessly cast away from her? How could she set the chance friends of the world against Matthew and Charity? How let her fate come between her and such love as these two true-hearted people lavished upon her?

“Eve will be home soon, Matthew,” said Charity one evening.

“You’re glad of that, my girl,” replied Matthew, with a satisfied whiff, as he removed his long pipe from his mouth, set it against the chimney corner, walked into the parlour, and, returning almost immediately, he quietly resumed his seat. “I think as it will do gradely; it looks clean and wholesome like yourself, Charity. I can picture Eve sitting on th’ sofy yonder; she’ll be no end stuck up, and give herself some fine airs; but she’s our little Eve after all, and we’ll bear it on her, Charity—she was, aye like a beam o’ light about th’ house; she’ll be good to look at I warrant, if for nought else.”

"That she will," said Charity. "Dear Eve!" and she smiled happily.

After a pause Matthew said—

"I'm wondering Mr. Green has na' called round to-night, he mostly does these days, Charity."

Charity pretended not to see the sly look that he gave her, as he continued—

"He doesna' mean to take his nay, I guess."

"Then he will have to," said Charity, quite sharply, so much so that Matthew gave a long, low whistle which brought her back to her usual sweetness.

"I'm over comfortable at home, Matthew, to think of any Mr. Green; and Evelyn wouldna' spare me, if you can."

The accent on the last words was reproachful, and Matthew said quickly,

"Dear old girl! It'll be a sorry day when it comes; but I reckon Mr. Right will turn up one o' these days, and then who would be selfish enough t' give him th' cold shoulder? Not Matthew Joyce, I'm thinking."

“Well but, Matthew, who told you as Mr. Green meant anything o’ that sort?”

“No one, Charity; I was my own informant,” he said, with a humourous twinkle in his eye. “When a feller makes a fool of hisself, ’tis pretty clear to everybody; and folks do say as a lover’s foolishness is as easy to see as aught else.”

“Well, Matthew, I told him as what Eve was more to me than a dozen husbands.”

“And I think as Charity Joyce never made a silly speech afore,” interrupted Matthew; “and though they do say, as in Ameriky there’s a colony where one man is allowed ever so many wives, I never heard, even there, as a woman had th’ like privilege.”

“You take me up so short, Matthew, I should have said as Eve was better in my ’pinion than any husband.”

“Then Charity you’re quite right not to accept of none—there’s a deal of misery in th’ world through marrying without th’ kind

of love as matrimony needs—so I think!” said Matthew, oracularly.

“Perhaps Mr. Green may take to Eve; and her to him,” said Charity, very much in the tone of one who believed it was a matter of certainty.

In truth, Charity felt that Mr. Green was “too much a gentleman” as she said, for herself; and she had made up her mind to resign her suitor to Evelyn, being quite sure that he would be unable to resist her sister’s fascinations.

Matthew understood Mr. Green better, having had his own experience with Bessie Smith; he knew well enough that a woman worthy of a man’s love is not easily forgotten; that it is not pleasant “to decline on a range of lower feelings” when you have hoped for something higher.

He did not argue the point with Charity, but said meditatively—

“I reckon Bessie and Will will be mostly settled by this time. We shall hear when th’ next mail comes in.”

Matthew sighed, and Charity looked up from her sewing to give a more agreeable turn to his thoughts, by saying—

“And Eve will be home Tuesday, come four weeks.”

“Four weeks next Tuesday,” echoed Matthew, “aye, th’ time’s soon passed, and I’m none sorry that th’ little lass is coming; it’s lonesome all day for you, Charity, and not so safe neither—one hears of such things these times. I’ve seen an ill-looking chap lurking about this many a day; but he’s left th’ place now, by th’ parliamentary train as passes at four o’clock. I didna’ feel comfortable in my mind about him; and thought I would take a turn up th’ road, and I sees my gentleman first thing; he was leaning over the pailing across th’ way, looking at th’ cottage as if he meant t’ make a picture of it in his mind; he’d a bundle in his hand and I saw him walk towards th’ station, so I keeps my man in sight, till th’ train started, and he ’long with it. He saw me on th’ platform as he looked out o’ th’ carriage

winder, and grinned savagely, as though he'd ha' liked to bite a feller. But that must be fancy," added Matthew, "he's a stranger here, and if I've gotten a henemy in th' world it's more than I know on; but I've been thinking that it's none so safe for you, Charity, to bide alone; the cottage is out of reach a bit; and tramps is a bad lot; seeing as folk will talk about your rare fortune, a tramp might be tempted to try and rob you; and I'm main glad as Eve will be soon here to keep you company."

"Why, Matthew," said Charity, laughing, "who would think you was so fanciful? Couldn't a stranger admire our nice cottage without any bad motive in his head?"

"No doubt, no doubt," replied Matthew, heartily ashamed of his suspicions, "but it set me thinking. He sneaked off cowardly enough too—not much of the dare-devil about him; but I feel a sight more comfortable that he's clear off th' place, fool as I am to say it."

“You didn’t need to make a lone woman afraid, Matthew,” said Charity, reproachfully, knowing how best to stem the torrent of his misgivings.

“Where’s all your pluck gone to, Charity?” retorted Matthew, sharply. “Must you turn pale at th’ sight of a snail, and be frightened at th’ thought of an evil which is as sure never t’ come nigh thee as my name is Matthew Joyce? I thought you had more brains than to make such mountains out o’ mole hills.”

The angrier Matthew’s manner grew the better satisfied Charity looked, as she triumphed in her own manoeuvring, till at last she fairly laughed outright.

“Ah, Matthew, I knew as you would come to your senses, when you saw me taking sides with you—we often make light of our own folly till we see th’ marrer of it in our neighbour.”

A knock at the door quietened Charity. She knew well whose knucklestapped so per-

sistently on the panel, and she moved slowly to open the door, as if collecting herself for an unpleasant encounter.

A jovial, smiling face showed itself through the niche of the door, which had been cautiously opened, and a deprecating "May I come in, Miss Joyce?" fell upon the ears of the inmates of the cottage, as Charity, brusquely and unceremoniously, flung the door back on its hinges, determined to give the intruder an ungracious reception; but the genial face only relaxed into more geniality at this unusual display of Charity's temper; and, at a sign from Matthew, he took a chair by the chimney corner, saying—

"I could not do without my evening chat; so I brought the paper with me that we might discuss the Education Bill once more, Matthew, after reading last night's speeches about it. I hope Miss Joyce does not object?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Green," said Charity driven into a corner—for why should she expect her

decision, given to him only last night, to effect his intercourse with Matthew.

No, Charity would not debar Matthew from his social evenings; but she would make it plain to Mr. Green, that she was more than indifferent to his visits.

Mr. Green settled himself down in neighbourly fashion, as Matthew said—

“Education, indeed! It does more harm than good to my mind—to women leastways. Look at Charity and Eve!”

“We must not be too personal, Matthew,” said Mr. Green, looking affectionately at Charity. “Miss Joyce will hardly agree with you, she is so proud of her sister, but you mean your remark to refer to the higher education of women.”

“Well, it doesna matter, as it has naught to do with th’ point in question, whether Charity or Eve is th’ best; but, as to being personal, we know what we know,” said Matthew, as if he were quite sure of the corresponding sentiments of his listener.

“Howsomever, Mr. Green, that’s neither here nor there as to th’ public in general, but you and me are not of th’ same mind in politics, and ’tis pretty clear as this new act will not draw our parties no nearer. I’m not for having one law for th’ poor and another for th’ rich, Mr. Green. Let poor folk do what they like with their own children.”

“Yes, that’s all very well, Matthew, but some parents don’t take any care of the progeny God has blessed them with, and the law wants to step in and assist these poor unfortunates. I don’t see how this bill is to be shaped exactly, but I have no doubt that some sort of compulsory education will be for the advantage of the country. It has done well in other countries. Why not in this?”

“Because Englishmen has stood up boldly for th’ rights of their fellows ever since King, John signed th’ Magna Charta,” said Matthew.

“Quite right too, Matthew, but this is

scarcely an interference with the privileges Magna Charta procured for us," said Mr. Green with a smile. "As long as there is a Commons in England no bill can be carried without its consent, and every year is giving more power to those who are represented by that body. So, if this Education Act passes, it will be the people's doing, and in my opinion a bill of the kind is needed."

"I don't agree, Mr. Green. I say, let every man or woman please theirselves; if they don't want their children made scholars on, well and good; if they do, why let th' State provide schools, and give folks th' liberty to go, but nought by force. It's cheating a man of his liberty say I, and such a thing I canna stomach. Th' Vaccination Act is a grand mistake too; everything as comes atween a man and his family is wrong, to my thinking."

"Well, Matthew, I don't say *that*. The public good must be considered. However, such an important step cannot be taken in a

moment, and our legislators will find this a ticklish matter to organise into a perfect system, and we shall be able to talk over their mistakes, and so on, a hundred times again, Matthew. When do you expect your sister, Miss Joyce? ”

Mr. Green had been too conscious of her presence to give full attention to the argument, for, though like most other Englishmen he dabbled in politics, he was no zealous partizan, and cared infinitely more about the affairs of Halkingham than the government of the land. He was one of the many who take it for granted that laws *will* be made adapted to the necessities of the age, and to whom it matters very little whether such laws are the outcome of a Liberal or Conservative power.

Mr. Green talked politics generally more from love of argument than interest in the subject; possibly, he might not even care to enter into debate with most men.

At election times, it had been reported

that when Liberals or Conservatives alike solicited his vote, explaining the failures of their respective opponents, Mr. Green was unassailable.

“Right or wrong, I’m Conservative,” he would answer, “as my father was before me.”

And there was the secret of his life—his father’s example !

Mr. Green had a fixed idea that Conservative or Liberal party in office the result would be the same ; they would fight against each other’s bills madly for a time, and, in the end, each would yield somewhat for the public good.

But his father’s example stepped in and settled his vote. So in business, the same controlling power was felt. His father had been upright and industrious, and James Green must perpetuate the character. His father had been a foreman before him, and, though James Green had been asked to become partner and adviser in the numerous

little manufactories that owe their origin in these cotton districts to the working classes, he had stood his ground, and declared that what was honourable enough for his father would do for him.

He was a man who could not be altered ; in all things he held to the creed of his father so persistently that he made men believe in its wisdom.

We shall see how Charity held out against this characteristic unchangeableness of her lover.

“ When do you expect your sister ? ” he said, gazing so fixedly at Charity that she was bound to answer, though she had intended to leave the conversation to Matthew.

“ Next Tuesday four weeks, Mr. Green. It will be a grand day for us ! ”

“ So I should say, from what you told me yesterday.”

Charity blushed, the more vividly that she was conscious of Matthew’s amused face.

“ What a mistake you’ve made, Charity,

not for t' ask Mr. Green into th' parlour. We've had it made agen Eve comes, Mr. Green, and it would be more home like to such as you, though Charity and me is best suited in th' kitchen here; it's our old place, you see, and so warm and handy to toast and boil th' kettle."

"I'm like you and Miss Joyce, Matthew; I'm used to the kitchen, and I like it."

That Mr. Green meant the kitchen to be so valued on its own account is unlikely, but he continued—

"With your consent the parlour shall be kept for your sister, Miss Joyce."

"But when she comes shall we sit there, Matthew?" said Charity inquiringly. "Eve will like to be with us, and in th' parlour too, so we shall have to give up the kitchen."

"I don't know that," replied Matthew, encouraged by Mr. Green's remark. "Perhaps she is none such a fool as we think her; she may like to please you, Charity, and to sit, as we have allers done, aside the kitchen

hearth. Why, bless me ! when she left 'twas all as there was to sit in."

"It's none fit for her," said Charity, quickly.

"But fit for me, I hope, Miss Joyce?" said her suitor, inquiringly. "I should not like to be deprived of what I count to be a privilege—the freedom of the kitchen."

"You're bound to choose for yourself," was the curt reply; "but Eve is not going to come home from school to be made nought of; it's too good to get her for that to happen."

Mr. Green went away impressed with the depth of Charity's sisterly affection, and not the less covetous of her love that it displayed itself—not for him ! As we have seen, his spirits were not easily depressed, nor his feelings of this kind to be readily repressed.

CHAPTER IX.

A WORD OF WARNING.

“It is my duty to you and to others to give you a word of warning, Evelyn. If you know of any reason why Mrs. Arlington should object to you as a friend for her daughter, you had better deny yourself the pleasure of visiting at Arlington. If you do not *now*—assuming an obstacle to exist—you will bring trouble upon your friend as well as yourself. It is not too late to change your mind to-night, Evelyn; to-morrow you will not have the chance. Once at Arlington, your wisest course will be to maintain the reserve which you have shown about yourself—which has struck me as being somewhat strange in so young a girl—during the time you have been amongst us. I am speaking from no ill-feeling, Evelyn, but I counsel you to consider my remarks, and,

having done so, to preserve a discreet silence concerning them. You know how to manage that, Evelyn," added Mrs. Delamere, a little satirically. "Whatever happens, remember I am not to be implicated in your schemes; you have kept me in as much ignorance as the rest. That you have done so is one reason I have for imagining that your former surroundings were not—ahem!—not entirely so desirable as those of some of my pupils. If I am mistaken, that is also your fault. I wish you well, Evelyn, but—if you will be advised—think of other people as well as yourself! Would your own friends approve of the intimacy? And, once again, would Miss Arlington's friends do well to countenance it? I know," she continued, noticing Evelyn's agitation, "that you mean well in a sense—you are not absolutely artful, but you are taking a course which may be the beginning of a worse evil. You have some affection for Fay, and she for you. That is a great element in friendship, but every one

has a right to expect confidence from one who becomes their guest, and Mrs. Arlington may exact that which you are unwilling to give. I am not asking you to reveal anything to *me*. Do not speak, Evelyn! For many reasons I do not wish to know your history—my school might be injured for one, and I own that if you reject my present advice, to refrain from visiting Arlington, you had better, for the interest of others as well as your own, be discreet during your stay there. Good-night, Evelyn!” Mrs. Delamere said, somewhat hastily, as if to prevent any troublesome revelation from her pupil. “Remember, if you decide after all to travel to Halkingham, I shall be the better pleased.”

So, with a smile of satisfaction at having fulfilled an unpleasant duty, Mrs. Delamere dismissed her pupil, and continued, with unruffled mien, to make up her half-yearly accounts, in which occupation Evelyn had interrupted her. She did not even allow

herself to surmise about Evelyn's decision, as it was beyond her own.

Evelyn was bewildered at Mrs. Delamere's remarks, and still more so at the cause of them. Till that moment, she had plumed herself upon having assumed her character to perfection—she had had no reason to believe that any one suspected her of being less than a lady.

Now, she trembled to think upon how slight a foundation her social eminence stood. She had reached her pinnacle of fame, only to discover its insecurity. So far and no farther, ambition had led her hitherto—to be a lady, and recognised as such by ladies.

But now Mrs. Delamere had shown her the instability of the position. Now, more than ever, she felt that to return to Halkingham would be failure. When she so hardly sustained her height of social dignity at school, what would it be at Halkingham, where she would be surrounded by people

who knew about her past life, and did not merely imagine its obscurity?

Evelyn rushed from Mrs. Delamere's study to her bedroom; she brushed rudely past Fay, declining her outstretched hand. Fay looked disappointed, but smiled as she impressed upon herself, once again, the fact that imperfection was pleasing.

"A strange girl! Mrs. Delamere calls her," said Fay to herself. "No doubt she has been making that opinion disagreeably apparent. The stranger the better, for exciting one's interest."

But Evelyn had the good and evil in her nature, struggling for the mastery. This friendship was not to her the simple one that it was to Fay. To maintain it, she had to deceive—to restrain her natural candour, to be something so mean that Fay, had she known it, would have despised her.

"Fay would think me contemptible," exclaimed Evelyn, wearily, "if she knew me." She did not say, "Fay would hate me." It

seemed to Evelyn that such a sentiment would be more easily outlived than Fay's scorn.

And she felt that her friend's nature was too true to hate where once she had loved.

"But what a bitter thing to me would Fay's scorn be!" thought Evelyn. "If I go away to Halkingham, without an explanation, she may suspect all, but she will never know it. At Halkingham, Charity will love me; and Matthew will grumble at, and make fun of me; and the Manorys will patronize me; and the factory girls will nod to me; and every one will say, 'That is the girl who meant to be a lady and couldn't manage it.' No, no! I will not go back to Halkingham! If I go with Fay, it will be so different to being at Mrs. Delamere's. No one will expect Fay's friend to be a *parvenu*, as the girls call it. I can enjoy myself, and please Fay, and do no one any harm; and they will not think anything wrong of me. They won't know! They won't know!"

repeated Evelyn, joyfully ; but, with the rapidity with which only thought can travel, there came to her mind Matthew's parting words—" Providence canna be cheated ! "

" Oh how miserable it all is ! " thought Evelyn. " And till Mrs. Delamere spoke, I was so happy ; I had almost forgotten that it was wrong—it seemed all so natural and fortunate. But let Arlington be what it will now, I cannot forget that I am an impostor, an adventuress, that horrid creature we read of in novels. But I am not that ! I cannot be so very bad, when I only intend to enjoy myself, and to taste, for once, the pleasures of a really, aristocratic, country home. Afterwards, I will go back to Charity, and be content with the memory of all the grandeur. How glad Charity will be to hear about it all ! "

Evelyn sighed, as she remembered that Charity was even now preparing the little cottage for her reception. Evelyn was not quite heartless, and she knew that, when to-

morrow's post brought the unexpected tidings of her protracted absence from home, Charity would be grievously disappointed.

Evelyn shed a tear of sisterly affection ; but with Charity were recalled all the disagreeables of home life, and her heart was hardened again, as she remembered how very diminutive the cottage would seem, even after Mrs. Delamere's commodious house, to say nothing of Arlington, of which she drew such fanciful pictures in her mind, as the reality itself could never realize.

How horrid it would be to sit in the homely, little kitchen at night, with Matthew, in working clothes, smoking bad-smelling tobacco, out of a clay pipe ! She had seen such an one that day, used by an old man from a workhouse, who was a weekly visitor to Mrs. Delamere, having once been her gardener, and she now supplied him with a few coppers for the purchase of tobacco.

Of course gentlemen smoked, as well as working men and vagrants, but that did not

comfort Evelyn. She was prejudiced against the pipe, the tobacco, the working clothes, and Halkingham itself, when she thought of her own connection with them.

"It is no use," repeated Evelyn to herself, "I cannot vex Fay, and I will not! I will go to Arlington, and live like a fairy, and cheat everybody as Cinderella did; and then I shall come back to drudge my life out, and be a working woman. I shall get old, ugly, and ill-tempered—a discontented, peevish mortal. But I shall have had my day, and it will be better than nothing."

Evelyn forgot the possibility of a Prince in the tale. Perhaps a vague notion of conquest, in womanly fashion, may have possessed her, but it was set on one side, with what little determination for good her nature still retained.

Evelyn, having made up her mind what to do, speedily composed herself to the situation. Few possess the ability to set care and thought on one side at pleasure, but Evelyn.

did. She was not such a volatile creature as she seemed—scarcely as shallow-hearted, and scarcely as deceptive. She was thoroughly versatile. She could deplore her own sin in one breath, and enjoy it in another, and, in that enjoyment, forget herself. She was more impulsive than determined.

Even while persevering in her resolution to be a lady, she was guided by every passing feeling. Mrs. Delamere had urged her to give up Fay's friendship; and had, for a moment, shaken her purpose; and possibly, a more persuasive voice would have induced her to follow its directions.

Probably, had she been met with fiercer opposition at home, when her resolve to go to school was first broached she might have relinquished it. It is not easy to determine how a person might have acted under untried circumstances; but I would impress upon my reader, that Evelyn Joyce was, in a measure, the slave of circumstance, and not

the designing creature which, in the course of future pages, you may sometimes be inclined to believe her to be.

She was not pliable, if she recognised a commanding agent; she had, in fact, a certain quiet obstinacy; but her impulse was stronger than her determination; and her feelings were readily impressed—her heart was softened or hardened by every influence brought to bear upon it. Hers was not a strong nature, but a weak one, weak alike in evil and good; and obstinacy had often taken the place of principle.

So it was, as a child, when thwarted by Matthew, she rebelled in her own quiet fashion; but, if he made a strenuous effort to combat her will, it yielded to his, as it had done when she objected to become a factory girl.

Never, in all her life, had Evelyn shown so much fixed purpose as when ambition fired her to change her position. We may consider it the salient point in this somewhat

feeble character—its seeds had been sown early, had been duly watered in the growth, till actually it was sufficiently developed for usefulness.

But Evelyn was unfit to battle with any great difficulty, and possibly, even ambition would yield up the ghost if any unforeseen *contretemps* should occur. Love of ease and luxury originated the passion, and a weak regard for comfort and peace might very naturally be its end.

But she was light-hearted enough this evening, as she kept the ball of conversation going amongst the girls, and many loving arms were twined round her waist, and kind expressions of regret were whispered, "That dear Evelyn was going away from them so soon."

But the jubilant voice of Fay checked them, as in mocking tones, she exclaimed—

"Now it's all sham and nonsense, girls. I am going too, and shall be quite as much missed; but you are afraid of making me

any sentimental speeches. And you ought to be ashamed of yourselves to begrudge Evelyn to poor me—with never a sister nor a brother to quarrel with at home, and only myself to amuse myself. You have all plenty of that patent kindred except Evelyn and me, and we seem to belong to each other naturally, and the best thing about Evelyn is that she is undemonstrative and reserved, and, therefore, unlike you all, who talk a great deal more than you feel about the state of your affections. What a speech I'm making, and a moral in it too, which, in case you are too dull to perceive it, is condensed into the words, 'Don't talk more than is necessary, or less than the truth!' Sorry to lose Evelyn! Of course you are! But submit yourselves to the inevitable, girls. It strikes me that Evelyn and I are the twin favourites of the school; but you don't seem inclined to acknowledge my merits, so I sing my own praises."

"Hush, Fay! Yes we do! You're a very

jolly girl ! ” chorussed the girls. “ We shall miss you awfully ; but as regards your moral speech, those who live in glass houses must not throw stones. If you cannot talk about brothers and sisters you have a word to say about everything else under the sun, and can chatter like a solitary magpie.”

CHAPTER X.

SIR ARCHIBALD FANE ARLINGTON.

A good old English Christmas was held at Arlington. From time immemorial its proprietors had honoured the custom and kept open house for all comers. Spiced ale, roast beef, plum-pudding, and mince pies were ready at all hours, in unlimited supplies, in the servants' hall. Yule logs blazed gaily in the great fire-places on Christmas Eve. Carol singers were sure of a warmer welcome and more substantial fare here than elsewhere. Even beggars approached the Hall with assurance, almost claiming a gracious reception, and the housekeeper had no limit put to her additional expenses by her generous employer.

No wonder that the Arlington family was held in high repute in the neighbourhood,

although in greatness of mind, and dignity of person, the present scion of the house might have yielded to some of those earlier squires of Arlington, who could hold their own in a tournament with vigour, or bow in chivalrous devotion to the fair lady whose colours they wore, who could sing as readily a ditty in praise of their mistress's eyebrow as wield a lance against an enemy.

But so long as hospitality was cultivated at Arlington, his guests cared little whether the proprietor graced his high degree and brave ancestry or no. So long as a man will submit to the invasion of his house and home till its resources are fairly taxed to the utmost, he is tolerably certain to be regarded as a jolly good fellow.

And any step that would diminish the *prestige* of his family name would never be taken by Sir Archibald Fane Arlington, so people said; and he liked to keep up the customs of his forefathers. He liked his position of lord of the soil immensely, and

he showered down benefits on his subjects like a prince.

His cousin Fay liked to ignore his greatness—to bring him down from the pedestal of honour which he raised for himself. Nothing would please mischievous Fay better than that her cousin should make a mistake in life, and pin his dignity to a walking stick.

We can guess the current of her machinations a little, if we play the eavesdropper, and listen to her words this Christmas morning.

“A merry Christmas to you, Arlington, and a fair bride before another comes round,” Fay said, with a laugh.

“I am quite willing, Fay, and am only waiting for you to be more gracious to your intended husband.”

“Intended fiddlesticks! *I* never intended it; and our respective, dear, departed fathers may pay me ghostly, reproving visits, if they will; but their trouble will be for no earthly use.”

“And you need have no fear that I shall

urge you against your wish, Fay," replied her cousin sharply; "I am fully aware that Arlington might well have a more suitable mistress."

"I thought men had to marry themselves not their places," said Fay. "Whoever heard of a man in love limiting his own happiness, in winning his choice, to the extent of his genealogical importance? If you wish to marry your precious Arlington, beware lest the chosen mistress make but little account of its hereditary lord, in closing the bargain."

"Fay, you forget yourself!" replied her cousin. "From being an abominable little piece of impudence you are becoming unmannerly—no one would fancy you had been born and bred a lady. One would think you could take a lesson, with advantage from your friend Miss Joyce—she, at least, is never hoydenish."

Fay laughed merrily, without the slightest displeasure.

“ Evelyn is a darling, Arlington ! ”

“ I believe she is,” said her cousin, seriously and slowly, as if the idea were occurring to him at Fay’s suggestion, which was too much for that young lady’s equanimity, and another peal of laughter trembled on her tongue and lips as she added, mockingly, “ And Evelyn is never disrespectful—and she worships old places—and positively adores the lucky possessors of such.

“ Does she ? ” said the Lord of Arlington, with much satisfaction, while complacently and contemplatively twirling his moustache.

Fay was convulsed, and the laughter, now irrepressible, pealed forth.

“ What an excitable girl you are, Fay ! ” said her cousin admiringly. “ A fellow would give a trifle to have such spirits as yours. By Jove ! The next best thing is to see them ”—another twirl of the suggestive moustache—“ the worst of it is, a fellow is never sure of you merry girls—you might

be laughing at a fellow half the time instead of with him. No! that will never do for Arlington!"

He said this half regretfully as he continued to look, with admiring surprise, at the cousin who made merry at his expense. But Fay did not relish his admiration, and proceeded to kill it.

"What a dead weight Arlington is for *you* to carry!" she said, glancing at his diminutive statue and frail figure with disdain. "Now, for my part, I think Arlington requires a queenly woman for its mistress—a lady of stately appearance, and too dignified to be offensively mirthful—loud laughter would be a mockery to the echoes of the past. The ghosts and hobgoblins would begin to clamour in accord with such a mistress."

"Loud laughter at Arlington!" interrupted its horrified master. "It would be intolerable!"

"Just my idea!" said Fay, coolly. "I

say, Arlington, what a glorious frosty day for Christmas ! And are you not glad that Evelyn Joyce happened to be with me just now that she could come with me here ? She is such a good creature, and so sympathetic ! Mamma scarcely liked to propose bringing her ; but are you not pleased she came, Arlington ? ”

“ I am, on my soul, Fay—any friend of yours is welcome ; but she is a splendid woman to look at, and she does not overpower a fellow with chaff. But, Fay, what of her family ? I fear she is not one of us exactly ? ” he asked, anxiously.

“ Not at present,” said Fay, *sotto voce*, but aloud ; “ you had better study the usual guide book to the origin of the aristocratic families of Great Britain, and find her out. I never enquire about *my* friends—but as to being one of us ? Well, I do not suppose she is ! What of that ? She would not be half so charming if she were tainted with our blue blood. If we could only mix up a

little, our appearance at least might be improved ! For my part, I like Evelyn as she is."

"So do I, upon my soul, Fay ; but then, you know, a man in my position has to be careful."

"Perhaps you ought to be, Arlington. Not that it matters about a man ; but, as you are only about half that proportion, it is best to be precautions. Girls have to be awfully wary lest they fall into a trap—the trap of their own perverse hearts—and love where fancy leads ; but a man in your position must elevate his wife. A wife is a man's equal—so acknowledged. But, alas, for us poor girls, she cannot be more than that !"

"There is truth in what you say, Fay—there is a good deal of sense in your remarks, very often. If your manners corresponded, you might, even yet, do for Arlington."

"Thank you, gracious cousin !" said Fay,

mockingly making a stately curtesy, after the fashion of bygone days. "If I could reciprocate your goodly favour, honoured sir, all might yet be well."

But, suddenly changing to her wonted voice and manner, she added—

"This is all nonsense that we have been talking about, Arlington. Forget it. Evelyn is a good and handsome girl, and *my* friend; but a *parvenu*, no doubt. That is why she finds so much to admire in this old place and its owner. One scarcely bows to worship when one is too haughty."

And Fay rushed off hastily, leaving her cousin to the reflections she had suggested and fostered.

"Vanity of vanity, saith the preacher, all is vanity." But when vanity vies with pride the mastery is doubtful.

Archibald Fane Arlington was, as we have said, a slight, diminutive man; he was light complexioned, with that pinkiness of hue which is esteemed so highly when it adorns a

lady's fair cheek, but which makes a fellow perpetually ashamed of his blushes; his features were good, though small. But whoever dreamed of depicting a man's features beyond a generalizing remark? But size, be it said, makes all the difference in the world—a pretty-featured man makes one uncomfortable on *his* account, even if it does not affect his own self-complacency.

Arlington's lord had light hair, and a light moustache, but was destitute of whiskers. Altogether, his was an unmanly face; and a weak face—restless, mobile lips, and a somewhat receding brow aided in producing this melancholy effect.

In a lower sphere, his face would have been his curse—his fellows would have derided him—women would have looked coldly at him—and hard work would have been a mockery.

Being as he was, simply the lord of Arlington, carefully educated, delicately reared, tastefully apparelled, and with the graceful

manners of a gentleman, he was not devoid of interest to a certain class of mind. Women made a plaything of him—men endured him as a pleasant bore too good-natured to crush—inferiors bowed down to him—and he was his own hero.

As he could not legitimately admire his own personal proportions and intellect, he fell back upon his goodly heritage; and Arlington was a wall of defence against the fire of the enemy—the said enemy being the suspicion of his own inferiority, in which vanity sometimes permitted him to indulge.

Arlington was a lovely place, though situated, perhaps, in one of the flattest counties in England. A man should be pardoned for having excessive pride in the home made sacred to him by ancestral associations, and Arlington was a fine, old place.

The park was extensive, and well wooded with numbers of huge oak trees, with trunks whose circumference betrayed the growth of centuries. The ground was undu-

lating, and a copse of trees, here and there upon the uneven surfaces, betrayed the good taste of those ancestors who first planned the future beauty of Arlington. But the avenue of elm trees, which extended for about a mile from the principal lodge gates, at the entrance of the park, was its pride; and there was also an abundance of fine deer.

This was the work of man—the pride of man had wrought thus—the pleasure of man in the gifts of Providence had suggested these means to add beauty to his home for the enjoyment of his future heritage.

“Truly man deviseth, but the increase is from above;” and the glory of Arlington would have been incomplete without Nature’s best gift—the broad, smooth-surfaced, but swiftly flowing river Arl, from which, as all things less take name from something greater, the family name arose, and this again gave rise to the estate.

The house itself was a large, plain structure, of comparatively recent date, not

noticeable for architectural beauty, but having an air of comfort and solidity; and, to satisfy antiquarians, there was still left, adjacent to the present house, a portion of the old building, which had been dismantled and partially destroyed by the ruthless hands of Cromwell, or his generals, and their Puritan soldiers; the walls had been riddled with cannon balls, as marks, in many places, still showed that the stone frontage had been defaced by those mighty weapons of warfare.

Brave, undaunted hearts had beaten within those walls, in the terrible days of civil war; unflinching spirits had not cowered beneath the cannon's roar, but had resisted the besiegers, in the king's name, while famine threatened them from within and foes without.

Tender hearts, mayhap, had bled with the knowledge that kinsmen were without the gates in hostile array, who had once been wont to grace the festive board, and whose

love-vows had awakened echoes which must now be silent.

Women, whose intuitive perception is said to be so true, may have felt that the cause of those dear foes must needs be good, which called for such sacrifices for pure patriotism ; while men, in the hot affray, gave themselves no leisure for such gracious thought, "but steeled their hearts, and donned their coats of mail, and bravely fought."

What a race of brave men dwelt then upon the goodly soil of England ! How puerile their present representatives ! Men of fourscore years defended their garrisoned and illustrious homes, and names, with the zeal, if not the strength, of some young Hercules.

But now, young Archibalds recall their prowess, and lisp about their pluck irreverently, though with some small gratification as they say, "Poor devils ! It was a hard fight, and a long one, and robbed us of a fair property ; it were better to have given in

easier, but our people never change or play the craven."

And there is something in such a heritage of courage! Despite the effeminacy of the present race—the careless, let-alone policy which selfishness suggests to us—let but the hearts of England's noblest be stirred—the cooler blood of the present scions of that brave ancestry be warmed, and England's heroes would still refuse to cry for mercy, and would brave a thousand deaths, for the dear sake of honour!

Even in these days—when enlightenment has made clear the necessity that kingly power should be moderated, and that he who rules, like the good wife, must never show who rules, but gratify the nation, like a spouse—even now, when we behold our ruined castles, our sympathies exist the most strongly for those noble defenders, who held out against the barbarian foes, who sacked, and pillaged and defaced so ruthlessly what

the wealth, and thought, and taste, of generations had enriched.

We deplore,—not the political strife—but the cruelty of those saviours of our national freedom, “So error mingles with our best, and only in Divine decrees doth justice rest.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE VOICE OF THE CHARMER.

A YOUNG girl's rich voice was charming her audience with the purity of its tone, and its unusual volume—that is to say, unusual, in an amateur. That little company would have been shocked, to a man even, and we know that feminine susceptibilities are keener, had it known the cause of this contralto's power. That, above the noisy din of the loom, it had once been heard; and that, in those mines of industry—our northern factories—such voices are by no means rare, and the girls exercise their natural, vocal gifts in unison—yes, and in harmony too, which is saying more—regardless of busy fingers.

This was the cause of Evelyn's success as a singer, but cultivation had mellowed and toned down the factory girl's voice, and

attuned it to sweeter melody. This was why her singing-master had been so well satisfied with his pupil's progress—so charmed with her artistic talent—while the other masters had complained of the young lady's inaptitude. Even the music-master had been in despair, because Evelyn's fingers, despite their shapeliness, could never be adapted with nicety to the keys, nor attain to a respectable degree of pliability.

But her singing was perfection! And what a power to charm the singer, when she is fair also, possesses! It is like the most delicately perfumed and lovely exotic—it enters into the senses, this gift of song and beauty!

And it was so at Arlington—they listened and wondered, these good, aristocratic friends of the factory girl!

Sir Archibald Fane Arlington, ensconced in a comfortable chair, at such an angle to the grand piano as to obtain a full view of the singer, was intoxicated—he was absolutely

steeped in admiration ; and a fathom depth less in love with self, which, in such a man, means intense adoration of another.

He was absolutely moving restlessly in his chair, and discomposing himself—this self-possessed, important owner of Arlington—because a young fellow turned the leaves of her music too considerately ; and gazed upon this imperial creature, as he thought, only less ardently than himself.

The host approached the piano, as the song ended, and Evelyn rose up smiling and blushing to reply to a remark of this obtrusive male friend. But Sir Archibald was energetic, for once ; and deferentially taking Evelyn's hand reseated her ; pleaded for another song ; and, holding the book to select one, succeeded in displacing his assumed rival, by interposing his own person between him, Gerard Petre, and the piano.

This was a young, newly-ordained clergyman, of good family, and brother to the rector of the parish, who was more than a

dozen years older, and a much graver character.

The Rev. Gerard was frolicsome; and soon sought out a congenial spirit in Fay; from whom his elder brother then withdrew, and took up his post by the side of that young lady's mother, whom he was ever wont to treat with great deference and courtesy.

Perhaps the worthy rector had his reasons for these attentions; and possibly the recipient misunderstood them; for she brightened up considerably at his approach; greeted him with most gracious smiles; and assumed sufficient vivacity to testify that her widowhood was not a source of that extremity of woe which is unwilling to be assuaged.

But the Rev. Canon Petre, for that was his dignity, wore a gloomier brow than usual; and Mrs. Arlington was deeply touched by that air of "interesting abstraction," as she termed his graver moods, when speaking of them to others. The widow's smiles relaxed,

and a gentle sigh reminded the rector that he had a sympathiser.

"These young people seem very happy," she said softly.

It was an unlucky remark; for, in the first place, the bachelor rector placed *himself* in that category, and by no means associated Mrs. Arlington with the same; and in the second place, he felt it to be a painful irony on his own state of mind.

He glanced at Fay and his brother in familiar and lively conversation; for the song had ceased, and Evelyn was touching the keys noiselessly, as she bent over them, blushing at Sir Archibald's compliments, and replying with that sweetness which was habitual to the girl, but which Sir Archibald graciously construed to be that touch of finer sentiment which endows the lover with the highest privilege and favour a lady can bestow.

So much at cross purposes can this holy—when at its best—game of love be played!

“Fay,” exclaimed Gerard Petre, for he had known and romped with her in childhood, though a few years her senior, and such familiarity was natural, howbeit his elder brother never ventured upon so bold an address. “Fay,” he said, “I believe it’s a gone case! Arlington looks sentimental—I never saw him so interested in anything but his moustache before.”

“For shame, Gerard,” said Fay, half angrily. “Arlington is not such a fop as you make him—he is only like other people, spoiled with fortune. You and I may congratulate each other, Gerard, for we never should have been such a pair of paragons, but for our poverty.”

Gerard was chagrined, and said—

“You are down on a fellow, in a brace of shakes, if he forgets himself; but I thought we were in accord here.”

“If I choose to beat my own dog, all the world is not at liberty to do so,” said Fay, *poutingly*.

Gerard laughed—

“ And if you pat him, the same rule holds good I suppose? But what are you doing to allow that young lady so many pats? She is trespassing in your preserves, is she not, Fay? It is too bad! I’ll put a stop to it, if you commission me—make a clean running for myself, and bowl Arlington over like a shot.”

“ Thank you, Gerard, I am much obliged! But I am quite able to take care of myself, and you are not. You would find Arlington, although you make light of him, a formidable rival, and Evelyn a dangerous plaything. You will be in deep water in no time, and you are not a bishop yet, and a wife would be an expensive affair.”

“ That is true, Fay—a melancholy fact. Where do you get all your sense from at your age? Pity, but Arlington could share it—by Jove! I am at it again—pull me up, Fay, do! But, with your practical views, why, in the name of all that’s fair, do you not take

Arlington in hand yourself? It's the correct thing to do."

"That's why I hate it," said Fay exasperated. "With all my faults I will not sell myself—I am as free to choose a husband as a milkmaid, and mean to do so without reference to any individual's taste but my own."

"Bravo, Fay! not even *his*? Well, you may take *me* on those terms."

"Nonsense, Gerard! I would not have such a conceited, whimsical, light-hearted, poppy-headed"—

"Spare me, Fay!" said Gerard, laughing, "but when you are willing, Fay, I am—that's a bargain."

"All right, Gerard, you know that will be never!"

"Honour bright, Fay, Gerard is willin'—after Dickens. There is many a less true word spoken, Fay, and with all her beauty and grace, Miss Joyce would have small chance against you in the long run with any

fellow, if it came to a battle royal between you."

"But there will be none," said Fay, earnestly.

"You do not mean," replied Gerard, "that you will let Arlington be caught like this, by a girl whom you have picked up in your usual eccentric way from no one knows where."

"Thank you, Gerard! I am eccentric you say? Well, then, had you not better let my eccentricities alone? For Arlington's choice must never be impugned, and, as you say, it is a 'gone case.'"

Poor Fay sighed dramatically at the success of her plot—uneasy about the result, and pitiful towards Arlington.

"You are a funny girl, Fay," said Gerard. "First you will not—and then you will—I fear it is a case of dog in the manger."

"Not at all, Gerard," said Fay, emphatically; "I was worrying about things; but after all, Arlington is a man not a baby, and

if he happens to fall in love with my friend, how am I to blame? He must bear his own burdens."

"Precisely what he would wish to do when they happen to be particularly fair and precious," replied the incorrigible Gerard, adding, "My worthy brother is looking upon us like a thunder cloud. What can have befallen Basil that he looks so super-serious? I get enough of that in ordinary; but, if it increases, defend me from my brother, Fay!"

"But I will not, Gerard, I never interfere between brothers, and you should not malign yours, for he is a good one," said the girl, in a low, subdued tone, as she glanced anxiously at the rector.

"All right, Fay," said the good-hearted Gerard, "but it strikes me that you want to appropriate my dog as well as your own, and all the dogs, Fay, for you rule me into the bargain, you omnipotent little creature."

And Gerard looked at Fay with boyish

homage, newly fledged curate though he was.

But Fay stamped her foot privately under cover of her dress, while she said crossly—

“Understand me, once for all, Gerard, I want to appropriate nobody—neither you, nor your dog, nor your cat, nor your mouse.”

“Come, Fay, this is carrying similes too far,” said Gerard gravely, “it is childish, though as a church mouse is, of all its kinds, the poorest, you may make free with mine. Give me a friendly smile to send me away happy, after all my blundering,” he added, tenderly.

And Fay looked up roguishly, and smiled at his bidding, as she said—

“You were always a good fellow, Gerard, and I am fond of you, just as I was when we played hide-and-seek, when you were eleven and I six.”

Why was Gerard’s smile so faint? And why, just then, when the rector paused to say good-night to Fay, was his voice less

steady, though kinder and more paternal than usual? And why did bright Fay look up with that lingering, sad glance, into the rector's weary eyes?

And Evelyn flushed with triumph, why had she that frightened look, like a scared hare seeking safety in flight, yet puzzled which way to turn?

Arlington only was satisfied—proud—radiant—happy! The words that bound him to Evelyn were not yet spoken, it is true, but she had looked tenderly at him, and he had made up his mind to make her mistress of Arlington.

Yet little more than a week had passed since that bright Christmas morning, when Fay had been almost prophetic in her good wishes!

CHAPTER XII.

A MOONLIGHT SOLILOQUY.

EVELYN JOYCE sat up late that night. When the house was still, and the fire had burned out, Evelyn drew up her window blind and gazed out upon the clear sky, the sparkling stars, and the solemn moon.

Perchance she sought for sympathy, and, having no person to whom she could entrust the secrets of her heart, sadness and bitterness overwhelmed her, and she communed with nature.

Who has not at times, unheard by any, unburdened a troubled heart when beholding one or the other of the two sublimest mysteries of nature—the ever-changing sky, and the never-ceasing sea? Who has not gone forth, at times disconsolate, and found contentment from companionship with earth, sky, and sea? When one becomes, as it

were, enwrapped in mystery—enthralled by it—though barely conscious of its influence—when one has been possessed of, rather than has realized, idealistic visions too indistinct to gather form or shape—the mystery has penetrated our spirit, and care and anxiety has departed, while we inhaled the pure air, and drank in the beauteous world, as nectar from its Maker.

But Evelyn stood and gazed, at first, silently. She admired the beauty of the night, and for a moment her soliloquy ceased. But she was not one to be awed by the lovely scene ; her nature was not to be stilled into quietude by the calmness of the air, and the pensive monotony of the searching moon.

She did not come of an imaginative race. Though superstitious enough about good and bad omens, country-side traditions, or old granny's tales, our working classes are too healthily constituted for the imagination to be oppressive, and their receptive faculty is matter-of-fact.

Hence things of time and habit seldom assume new faces to them.

Evelyn would have laughed at the notion of the moon's gravity reproving her, and beyond a passing glance of recognition of the beautiful moonlight, the scene did not hold her.

And yet she had unconsciously sought for sympathy, and she pressed her face against the window pane, as she murmured—

“Poor dear Charity !”

The girl looked lovely, with her light hair flowing upon her crimson dressing-gown, and the moon lending light to both. Her face was pale in this almost unearthly light, but her eyes, usually so radiant and sunny, were suffused, and their expression was tender and pure.

Her good angel was near her now ; the memory of Charity came back ; the longing for the old home ties was taking hold of her. But she shivered, and her face altered.

“Charity,” she repeated, in a colder voice,

“may be you will never know that I really and truly love you! And yet I do! Oh! Charity! Charity!” she called in a broken voice, and then listened to fancy she heard that old, cheerful answer—

“Coming, Eve! Make haste, lass, to be ready afore Matthew! Let’s stir about, and side things up a bit afore he comes in!”

Evelyn shuddered at the memory. Not for herself! After this lapse of time, the old, familiar language came back to her as music, but she trembled when she thought what impression such like speeches might make upon the polished ears of her friends.

And these friends were as a mesh about her, encasing her, and separating her still further from her relatives.

“He loves me,” said the girl, with a gratified smile. “He is rich, and proud, and a baronet, and he loves *me*—the poor factory girl. I can say it now, when no one is by; I can remember it all so well—those old days. *They* were good old days after all!” said

the girl, with a sigh. "How shocked they would all be here if they knew. Fay would be angry, and Mrs. Arlington would be scandalized. And he—Archibald—he wanted me to say his name, just for once, he said, to hear how it sounded, because the others all call him Arlington. What did he mean, I wonder?" she added, with a conscious blush. "I will not pretend not to know, when I am alone, and can be candid"—with a gesture of irritation—"I can be true to myself any way. He loves me; he will ask me to be his wife—soon—perhaps to-morrow. Fay wants it, but Mrs. Arlington will be sorry. And he will be happy, and foolish, and infatuated! But, Charity, some way, I would rather be home again with you, out of all this temptation—your own little Eve, promising never to be naughty again. I did not know it would come to this—choosing between my good old Charity and a rich baronet!"

The girl buried her face in her hands and sobbed.

“ May be in years to come he—Archibald ”
—she shuddered again—“ will forgive me
that I was a factory girl, and did not tell him,
and will like me to see Charity, and have her
with me—who knows? Any way, I am de-
termined, come what may, if I have to hide
things till my dying day, I will see Charity
again—and often. I have learned to deceive
well, and the lesson is perfect, I think. Oh !
Charity, perhaps you will learn to hate me
and my crafty ways—to hate me, as I hate
myself ! ” added the girl bitterly. “ I think,
if I come to hate myself more than I do this
night, I shall die. And yet it is so easy to
escape it all. Before Fay is up, or any one, I
can disappear, can run away to Charity, and
tell her everything ; and she will bless me,
and praise me for my moral bravery, and
then ”—the fervour of her manner decreased,
and the words came slower—“ then I shall
stay at home—ever after. It would not be
treating Fay very nicely, after all her kind-
ness, and it might pain *him* ! What did Fay

say when she kissed me to-night? ‘ We shall be almost sisters, Evelyn, and I love you. But you must be careful now ; you must not disappoint Arlington—he cannot bear it. When he was but a boy the doctors said that he was to have no annoyance, and that all trouble must be kept from him, or the consequences might be serious. So you must not teaze him, Evelyn. And let me caution you not to wound his pride, and, as you have come amongst us as an orphan, and been accepted as our friend because of your own sweet nature and appearance, let us have no disagreeable disclosures, if matters come to a crisis. Don’t be vexed, Evelyn, there’s a good creature ! Plain words are sometimes the kindest, and mine are intended to make it all smooth sailing for you. I like Arlington, and I know him, and you will humour me and him, I believe, on this point, dear Evelyn. And now let us kiss and be friends, as the children say—always friends and allies, Evelyn.’ ”

Evelyn Joyce was more thoughtful and less emotional by this time. Her friend was true and steadfast, suspecting much, but not all, yet willing to overlook a good deal, she was sure, in the future. Some time she might be trusted with all the former details of Evelyn's life, and help her.

That Fay wanted her to marry Arlington was clear, and that she, for some reason, dreaded the effects upon him of a disappointment in love was equally evident.

Evelyn was touched ; she liked to feel that she had this power over another's happiness, and not the less that this other was a baronet, and that she intended to promote his happiness.

The girl was not thoroughly heartless ; she would not have rejoiced in a man's thralldom if she did not hope to make it a pleasure to him, and, except while the memory of Charity overcame her, Evelyn meant to be gracious to her suitor.

She quickly brought herself to believe in

the necessity of the case, and even felt herself to have exercised some self-denial in giving up her faithful Charity; so easy it is to delude oneself into believing in the justice of one's own actions.

“I wonder if Uncle Abraham would call this making good use of his money,” she said, with a merry smile; such was her versatility in turning from one subject to another, and also the prompting to self-glorification.

“Uncle Abe cut off his son with a shilling because he *would* grovel in a low way of life instead of rising to the importance of his new position, so I suppose I am doing what he would wish. Yes, it is right to think of that! It is making good use of the money to do with it what the person to whom it once belonged would have approved. Poor Cousin John! How sorry Charity was for him! When I am rich, they shall all have plenty, and Will and Bessie shall not be forgotten across the sea. And I do not think it would

be very nice at Halkingham—to live there always. How pleased Fay will be! And he will be a good, kind husband. Do people always fall in love, I wonder? I agreed not to deceive myself, so I confess I am not in love—no, not the least bit—not even so much as I once fancied myself to be with that absurd Henry Delmar.”

Evelyn laughed at recalling this episode in her life's history, but soon reflected, with a sigh—

“He has forgotten me by this! It must be very nice to care for some one ever so much—more than for yourself, a great deal. I do not think I ever shall; I am too selfish, and, if I marry Archibald Arlington, I shall never have the chance. However,” she continued, meditatively, succouring her own conscience by appealing to that possessed by an honoured relative, “Matthew always said Betsy was a foolish body to take Will instead of himself, and yet she loved Will, so I suppose it is not always best to marry one

you love—certainly not to wait till you do love some one, if it means disappointment to Sir Archibald Fane Arlington. I shall make him happy; I mean to do *that*,” she added seriously, “and perhaps if I were in love I might never make any effort to be a perfect wife; I should be so full of thinking about my feelings that I might neglect my duties. It seems odd to make up one’s mind never to give oneself the opportunity of falling in love fathoms deep like other girls. Heigh ho!”—and Evelyn sighed—“one cannot have everything. If I could, I would have Charity—Charity constantly and ever, and no lover! But I like so many other things—beautiful clothes, and fine, easy ways, and good appointments. After being used to a horse to ride on, whatever should I do without one? It makes me feel so healthy and lively. They say I am at my best on horseback. How lucky it was that I thought of going to the riding school when I was at Mrs. Delamere’s! Charity, you must not fret

after me, lass"—she added the well-known epithet tenderly—"I am not worth it. And no one helps me! No one helps me!"

She wailed her plaint bitterly. Ah, poor Evelyn! If you do not help yourself, how can you blame others? Presently the girl rose, quite composed, and said—

"I will think no longer—things must take their course. I will go to bed, and sleep. I have tired myself out now, and all to no purpose. I am just where I began, and the moon is passing over—it must be near morning. There! I will lower the blind, and draw the bed curtains."

And so Evelyn rested upon her luxurious couch, and slept peacefully, as the young *will* sleep, even when sorrow and anxiety has come to them.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVE AGAINST THE WORLD.

As a consequence of Evelyn's excitement, she awoke with a wretched headache, of which circumstance Fay's maid informed her mistress, who came to her all anxiety and insisted upon her "darling Evelyn" keeping in her room.

This Evelyn was by no means disinclined to do, as she dreaded the final moment when her decision must be given, and her fate be out of her own keeping.

But Sir Archibald could ill brook the delay, and sent her anxious messages by Fay, entreating for a reply in her own words.

Fay was the bearer of lovely flowers from him, and a splendidly engraved gold vinaigrette, which he had ridden over to the nearest town to purchase.

He told Fay to tell her that he had a far

lovelier present in reserve, which he dare not give her by a deputy ; and Fay laughed when she repeated his words, and made fun of " poor Arlington and his ridiculous love."

And Fay asked Evelyn if she guessed what the other gift was, and suggested for mischief that it might be " Arlington's own heart." And she teased her till Evelyn was disconcerted and embarrassed, and said simply—

" It could not be *that*, as he would not have so much vanity as to call anything personally his own lovely."

" Only *you*, you darling, when he gets you," said Fay. " You look more beautiful every day—quite the lady of Arlington."

" Do not, Fay, please," said poor Evelyn ; and she tossed the love-gifts carelessly aside, and declared that Fay was making her head worse, and that she must have a few hours' quiet or she should be ill.

So talkative Fay went away, but Evelyn heard footsteps pass her door, and return

again, so constantly that she began to fancy herself a prisoner under guard; and at last she came out of her retreat, because she felt hemmed in by the love she did not prize.

It was, in truth, Sir Archibald who haunted her near neighbourhood. He loved this girl desperately—with all the strength his weak nature had, he was becoming more interested in another than himself; but things are proportionate; and when his whole mind, small though it was, concentrated itself on one object, his love became mighty.

He was heedless of the comments of his little world—the whole household began to remark upon his infatuation, and to show deference to the beautiful young lady who was likely to become its mistress—the old butler even, who had lived in the service of the present baronet's father, did not deem it unnecessary to ingratiate himself with the future power.

All this discomfited Evelyn. She began to

realize the difficulties of her position. While she remained the obscure individual, sheltering under Fay's wings, she had merely acted *dummy*—nothing was required of her.

Now, it would not be enough to look pleasant and affable. Her manners would be criticized in the servant's hall as well as the drawing-room, and a certain stateliness and graciousness was required in her bearing towards the pampered menials of Arlington; steering clear of the overbearing haughtiness of the proud ignorant, and the familiarity of the affable ignorant, there ought to be that accustomed habit of courteous command apparent, as an undercurrent that stirred the very depths of the stream, but left the surface flowing smoothly.

All that day and for many later days, Evelyn was conscious of a difference in the bearing of the whole household towards herself—a subservience and consideration to which she was unaccustomed was displayed towards her.

And she was conscious also of expectations on their part, which she could not satisfy—which she divined by instinct ; but, not being to the manner born, she could not, with all her tact, assume the dignity of her future station without some training and some vexations in its course.

Instead, Evelyn became awkward and confused, so that even her infatuated lover could see that she was ill at ease, and she shunned observation and the officious attentions of the household.

Of course this was extremely foolish, and a well-bred young lady—though a few love-blushes might be pardoned when with her equals—would never deem the scrutiny of her inferiors a sufficient reason for them. Every one is, or ought to be, matter-of-fact in their presence and unconscious of the individuality of attendants.

It had come to this, that all the household recognised the master's purpose—except Mrs. Arlington. And she, being only a guest, it

is scarcely surprising that the sharp-sighted and quick-eared menials should understand the signs of the times better.

Mrs. Arlington was, as we have seen, a somewhat obtuse individual. But then, when people are full of their own plans, they often decline to see the possibility of their being set on one side by those of others; and so, perhaps, this was why Mrs. Arlington was un-receptive of external appearances, and pinned her faith to the "propriety" of her family.

There was no doubt but that Fay and Arlington had been "willed" to each other by their respective fathers—the match was arranged for them, when they were babies and could not speak for themselves; and, surely, they could never be so profane as to break the vows then made on their behalf.

So Mrs. Arlington reasoned; and, though Fay had boldly renounced those obligations laid upon her by a dead father, and Arlington was leisurely in submitting the settlements to Mrs. Arlington's consideration, she never

dreamed but that the match would take place, and that they would settle down as an orthodox couple, doing their duty to society and each other without experiencing any of those violent waves of turbulent love which upset the easy current of life, and are the cause of so many social discontents and mistaken matrimonial ventures.

Of course, Mrs. Arlington had never allowed *herself* a hero, but had bowed to the inevitable, and taken her appointed place. And why should any daughter of hers desire more?

This defection of Sir Archibald, then, would be a sad blow to Fay's mother.

And Fay knew it! And Sir Archibald knew it! They both dreaded the disclosure, and both very foolishly withheld it. And Evelyn, who by this time was downhearted about the whole affair, acquiesced.

Sir Archibald's eager love was trying—her future position difficult—and she felt, like many another girl to whom the wooing is

objectionable, that marriage itself might be far less so, as her husband might not be so exigent as her lover.

And yet she was not easy to persuade ; and was coyness personified. So that poor Sir Archibald became, daily, more hopelessly her slave : and, daily, more importunate to claim his own.

Yet Mrs. Arlington was still blind. And still the trio combined to darken her vision ; till it became daily more difficult to confess how they had deceived her.

Fay felt herself such a culprit that she lost her spirits : and the rector became graver. Had it not been for the reckless buoyancy of the rector's brother, the party would have been a dull one.

But the rector imagined his brother to be the cause of Fay's sadness—he thought that Gerard Petre had slighted her ; and that his gay manner was an insult to the girl.

The Christmas party had not yet separated, as Sir Archibald insisted upon his guests re-

maining ; and, as a severe snowstorm prevented the distant neighbours from exchanging visits, the Arlingtons, and the rector's smaller household were thrown upon their own resources.

No wonder that romance was enkindled in such an atmosphere—that the old-fashioned winter brought back old memories—memories of days when men loved, as they do but rarely in these days, chivalrously and well ; and both men and women dared much for those they loved. Shy girls respectfully, but firmly, set aside their parent's wishes, when the master passion was concerned ; and surmounted all the obstacles which separated them from the husband of their heart.

I do not say such examples are blameless : but, at least, girls had hearts in those days that *could* love ; and they refused to be sold for gold or station. And, with all deference to ambitious parents, there is some virtue in matrimonial love, and when right conquers might, it is a matter to rejoice at.

Parents do wisely to study worth and suitability in a suitor; but a maiden's fancy must not be set at nought, and if either of these necessities have to be done without, sacrifice the suitability, in so far as it is represented by rank and fortune: for, in the arena of this busy world of strife, gold may be lost, and won again—and yet again—but the gift of a loving heart renounced can never be regained.

But romance cannot be fed by story, without some previous preparation in the heart of the hearer; and, though such memories might fan the flame of Sir Archibald's love till it burned brightly and well, Evelyn was unromantic — unsensational — matter-of-fact — and so unimpressed by truth or fiction. Only beautiful and beloved!

And Sir Archibald thought, "How pure is her nature! My little saint! My sweet timid bird!" And he longed for the day when, as his wife, she would venture to show him and be caressing and fond enough

to satisfy his craving heart with the reality of his bliss. He declined to hear any explanation about her family, when Evelyn, at first, faintly protested against the inequality of the match. "Let the past alone, love! You are mine now—my Peri! My peerless one! I wish only to hear about yourself—to read your sweet character in your daily life. What are your friends to me, love?"

So said her lover, magnanimously. While he was making his mind up to the venture, he was not indifferent to her social status; but he had grown beyond this—his love had conquered his pride; and he was not so foolish as to be blind to the fact that discussion would only make the matter of graver import. Finally, he dreaded separation from Evelyn, beyond any other evil which might befall him. This was why he so weakly kept his secret from Mrs. Arlington. Her interference might be fatal to his hopes. She, in her matronly wisdom, might insist upon some further knowledge of Evelyn.

And this even Fay, but less selfishly, dreaded. She was not by nature deceitful; and she hated underhand ways, when they meant anything more than mischief. And the knowledge that she had lent herself to them, for a serious purpose, as it had fallen out, made her sulky and cross. But, as matters had gone so far, she would stand by the consequences, like a brave little woman. And it was not for herself, but for others. Fay would never have been so mean as to withhold the confession, on her own account. But she liked Arlington more than she had ever done in her life before, now that he had no desire to appropriate herself; and showed himself to be possessed of such genuine and deep affection for her friend. She believed Evelyn would be good and true to him: and she knew that Arlington would be broken-hearted, if anything should now prevent his marriage. Then she thought of those fatal consequences foretold for Arlington, in his childhood, by those clever doctors, should trouble or annoyance come near him.

She could spare him from such a fate. Her mother might be thoughtless and indifferent—vexed with the failure of the family scheme to marry the two cousins, she might not use the most prudent means in trying to convince Arlington of his folly. No, Arlington must not be sacrificed ! And if people blamed her afterwards, what matter, said Fay to herself, as her thoughts wandered, unconsciously to the rector, and she fell into a meditation upon his excellencies, his sermons, and other valuable suggestions, with a grave contentment, even though doubtful of his approval of her conduct.

And Evelyn had accepted that lovely gift from her lover—a hoop of large diamonds, the purest to be bought ; but she did not wear it on her finger. Though Sir Archibald declared that no one would suspect it to be his gift, Evelyn was wiser. Then her lover would not be content till he knew that she wore it upon her fair neck, beneath her dress, and he procured a short chain to hang it on, *which was an excuse for a diamond locket.*

He was anxious that she should remove her old-fashioned jewellery, which had once been her dead aunt's, and came, with the legacy, to Charity and herself.

But Evelyn refused to make any change; and she still wore, constantly, the bracelet made of hair, with a scroll of gold to fasten it; a slender chain, with a heart attached; and a coral brooch and ear-rings—such simple decorations, which had been worn only on holidays and high occasions by Uncle Abraham's wife. And perhaps Sir Archibald liked her best so: and rejoiced that “no hand but his should make *his* Enid burst sunlike from cloud.”

CHAPTER XIV.

TROUBLES NEVER COME SINGLY.

THE rector had gone to his bachelor home. His brother had accepted a curacy in a remote county ; and, still, Mrs. Arlington was persuaded to remain as her nephew's guest, with her daughter and friend. She was, in some respects, like Fay—she was careless about doing things exactly *en règle*. Many a mother would have had a delicacy in permitting her daughter and herself to remain long the guests of an assumed *fiancé*, even though the relationship warranted such intimacy. But Mrs. Arlington was so much at home there ; and was so certain that she would, as Fay's mother, be the future *major-domo* of the establishment, that she already suggested alterations and improvements to her nephew, and she was gratified by his

ready reception of her suggestions ; and his eagerness in commencing to carry them out.

It was not that she did not notice his admiration of Evelyn—it was too marked to escape the most unobservant eye. But this did not trouble her. She belonged to a class of whom the masculine proportion have considerable license in their attentions to the fair sex. Mrs. Arlington therefore only smiled superciliously, and said to herself, “ Fay is a strange girl ! She does not understand jealousy—and if she be indifferent why need I be fastidious ? Men *are* such creatures !

She little thought that her nephew and daughter were in league together against her—it was their unusual friendliness in fact, which helped to delude her—at last they seemed to be coming to a right understanding together.

Now, thanks to Fay’s connivance, Evelyn and Sir Archibald could roam together undisturbed about the park and grounds ; and

an interruption was so unusual, that Sir Archibald exclaimed impatiently, if no worse, when his butler came near him one day, while engaged in a delicious *tête-à-tête* with Evelyn.

The butler was followed by another man, in appearance something like a gamekeeper, or one in a similar station ; and Sir Archibald might well begin to grind his foot against the earth, and mutter—

“ Confounded impudence ! ”

But the butler looked too profoundly deferential to merit the rebuke ; and, though his master chafed inwardly, he desisted.

“ Well, Simpkins, you want me, I suppose. But you can take that fellow off. Let him see the steward ; and see that such people are shown only to his room for the future. If necessary, I can see such visitors there.”

“ Pardon me, Sir Archibald, it is the young lady who is wanted. This is a stranger to me, but he claims acquaintance with Miss Joyce ; and not all my saying to the contrary

could make him deny his business. But I did not know he was following close at my heels. You have to be precious sharp about such customers as these, Sir Archibald."

"It seems so, Simpkins, and that you are hardly sharp enough," said Sir Archibald, severely. "Miss Joyce cannot see him."

And Sir Archibald flushed up, and looked disturbed, and then turned courteously to Evelyn, whom the eyes of the stranger seemed to glare upon savagely.

"You do not know him? Shall I send the fellow off about his business?"

"Yes," replied Evelyn, hurriedly, "he frightens me, he looks so angry. I do not know him at all. I never saw him before—it is a mistake."

"You hear, fellow," said Sir Archibald, angrily to Simpkins; "and remember it is as much as your place is worth, or that of any one on the estate, to annoy this young lady—my guest."

"Oh, indeed, Sir Archibald, I understand

your orders," said old Simpkins, shortly, angered out of his usual deferential imperturbability. And, turning round to the stranger, he added, "Now go along off about your business. You've about done mischief enough for one morning—to get a decent faithful servant of the family into disgrace. A nice return for years of service!" he muttered under his breath.

But the stranger stood his ground, and answered—

"Yes, I'll be 'bout my business sharp enough. It's with yon upstart girl I have to do, and, if she'll be wise enough to walk this way, I'll say my say quietly, though I've a good mind to give the squire yonder a taste of my mind, and set her grand friend's against th' girl, for spite. Not that she's ever done me no harm, but there's those of my own flesh and blood have used her for my ruin. Now master, what do they call you—Simpkin—you may go about your work, being as you have chosen to serve

instead of a line of independence, you'll 'appen obey that little order. And, Sir Archibald, if you'll leave this 'ere young woman we'll settle our little score together. Now, miss, there's no mistake, so do not give yourself them there delicate airs, as if the sight of me upset your stomach. I'm your cousin John, come home from Australia, to claim my own again—or fight it out, till I'm a dead man. There's a decent chap of a lawyer, in London, as says if I can prove my father was of weak intellect, it will upset the will, and make me the heir; and I'm bound to prove *that*; else how would you 'count for a man leaving his property away from his own son, to nieces whom he knew nothing about whatsoever? Now, Sir Archibald, if you leave us two together, 'appen we can come to a bit of a compromise; which this lawyer, as is a decent chap, says is the best end of it. Will you leave us to
hance of settling things amicable

And the stranger looked admiringly at the handsome face of the girl; and, under the influence of her beauty, seemed to forget his vindictive feelings. Sir Archibald turned to Evelyn, in desperation. The words seemed to stick in his throat, and yet he maintained a show of calmness.

“Is it possible that you know this fellow?”

“No, oh no!” said poor Evelyn; but she looked, nevertheless, fearfully at the stranger.

“Then you will not claim kinship with me; and I shall do my worst,” said the latter, with wrath in his eyes—his brave, reckless, handsome eyes, like those with which imagination endows a bandit chief.

Sir Archibald, looking like a delicate, silken-haired, fiery terrier setting a mastiff, said—

“We will settle it between us. Leave this scoundrel to me, Miss Joyce!” For he was cautious, being aware that old Simpkins stood within earshot; but it sounded cold to Evelyn, who was feeling ashamed and sore.

"You may be quite sure that, as you do not know him *now*, you never will—nor never see the rascal again; so do not be offended at my taking the law into my own hands."

"Who talks about taking the law into his own hands, I should like to know—two can play at that game," said the stranger, who rushed towards Evelyn, and, taking her hand rudely, tore away the hair bracelet, and laid hold upon the chain and heart at her neck. "I'm no thief; but I cannot bear to see my own mother's trinkets on that upstart girl—if it was t' other one I'd have given in."

Sir Archibald was infuriated, and prepared to show fight; but the stranger held him at arms length, till the baronet, besides himself with rage, clutched at his opponent's throat vindictively. It was evident that the baronet was madly in earnest, and held his opponent in a deadly grip, as the latter seemed unable to release himself; but he rapidly drew from his pocket a small pistol, and, before Simpkins had time to interfere, the infuriated baronet

was shot in the arm, so that his hand dropped away powerless, from sheer physical pain and shock to the nerves, to fulfil its murderous intent; and Simpkins came up in time to restrain his master from further violence.

“Lodge him in the county gaol,” shouted the baronet.

“All right, sir,” said the butler; “as soon as ever you are calm, Sir Archibald, I will attend to *him*.”

But how was it that the butler motioned to the intruder to escape; and Evelyn also went round to him, imploring his speedy departure, but in vain?

“No! no!” he said, “I’m none such a rogue as that—I mean to stop and have it out with the gentleman, when he has come to his senses, and can stand up like a man.”

There seemed little chance of this, for, as Evelyn approached the stranger, Sir Archibald’s fury broke out afresh, and it needed all Simpkins’s strength to hold him.

“He used to have these attacks, when a

boy, at times. He's dangerous, miss!" Simpkins managed to explain. "Please go to the house, and tell them to send off for Dr. Myers, and Miss Fay perhaps could soothe him. *You* had best keep out of his sight, miss. I tell you he is not safe."

For Sir Archibald was making vigorous efforts to reach Evelyn, with fury still in his eye. Evelyn needed no second bidding; but, meeting some gardeners on the way, she sent them to Simpkins's aid, and reached the house in an almost fainting condition.

Simpkins, left with the baronet, had his work to hold him; and but that he was a slight man it would have been impossible. And Simpkins dare not let the stranger approach a step nearer, lest murder should ensue; so that, when the gardeners came to his aid, it was not a moment too soon.

"Take care of that scoundrel," Sir Archibald had still sense to say; and the stranger turned to one of the men, and said—

"Here, master, I will go with you quietly

—it will happen silence yonder madman: but I have done no wrong, except in self defence.”

When the gardener and his prisoner had passed silently away, Sir Archibald's passion subsided; but he gave a few, deep, gasping sighs, and became unconscious; so that his prostrate body was being carried in the arms of his servants when met by Fay, as she came to assume the task of soother to her unfortunate cousin.

All was confusion and incoherency. The struggle, in its description, assumed many shapes, and the stated cause of it was as varying. No one seemed to know anything, except that Evelyn had witnessed it, and that the man who had attacked Sir Archibald was in gaol.

And Sir Archibald himself lay in a critical state during the afternoon and night. And Fay and Mrs. Arlington tended him, and once or twice Fay had stolen out to assure poor Evelyn that Arlington would be better

soon, and had found Evelyn with a white, frightened, desperate face.

And even Fay wondered at the expression—it was so much more, yet less than sorrow. But as yet Fay did not know that the accident had been occasioned by Evelyn.

“Would you like to see him just for a minute, when mamma is not there?” asked Fay pityingly.

“No, not for the world!” said Evelyn, in frightened accents; and then added, more naturally, “Go to him now, Fay dear, I shall be all right here.”

And the last time Fay came to her was about three in the morning, and still Evelyn was dressed, and sitting half stupified in her chair, as if listening for sounds from the sick room, and Fay’s heart smote her that she had judged her to be unfeeling.

“I am in your place by his side, Evelyn she said. “But never mind—your day

—God restores him to us,”
“I’m going”

down now, Evelyn. You try and rest too, and fasten your door that no one will disturb you."

During the early morning the doctors met to consult about their patient, and they said recovery was possible, but that the intellect, always weak, would never regain its balance—that his bodily health might become as good as ever—or he might grow weaker by degrees, not by days, but months, or even years, so gradual it might be. Truly a mournful verdict to pass upon a human being! A slow, lingering death of body, and the reason—the real life of man—snuffed out as a candle.

Fay was disconsolate with grief for her cousin, and she thought, "How will Evelyn bear it? How can I break it to her? And there is no one but me to do it—because they do not know—they will perhaps never know *now* how much he is to her. They will think she can bear these heavy tidings easily, as a stranger; and they will tell her hastily

and cruelly. Oh, Evelyn, your poor Fay must be the one to wound you, because she will do it the most tenderly!"

And Fay dragged herself wearily to Evelyn's room to fulfil her self-imposed task, and found a reprieve, for the door was still fastened, and Fay knocked, ever so gently, but received no reply.

"Poor Evelyn! she is sleeping heavily after her long night watch. I will not disturb her yet," she said.

And Fay went many times, but at last she began to fear that her friend was ill, and knocked loudly, oh so loudly—but no response came!

Evelyn had fled! Hours ago, while the stars were still overhead, almost as soon as Fay had left her, Evelyn had set out on her long journey. Not home, alas! But as a lonely wayfarer, seeking a rest she knew not where!

Fay recollected Evelyn's countenance—the agonized, frightened, hardened look, and how

it had melted into softness as Fay spoke tenderly, till Evelyn had sobbed upon the neck of her friend.

“God help us, Fay! You have been always a true friend—heaven bless you, dear!”

Yes! that was Evelyn’s farewell! For she had pondered over the events of the morning, and had arranged her plans during the hours that she had sat so still and silent in the solitude of her chamber.

The unknown cousin’s unexpected appearance had disclosed her secret—and not only to Sir Archibald, for his menial had heard it, and in a day or two it would be, not only household gossip at Arlington, but it would be talked about in many other households. And how would proud Sir Archibald bear it? How had he borne it? Had not his voice grown hard, even to Evelyn herself, at the very beginning of suspicion?

And as the tale became clearer, had not his anger overslipped the bounds of prudence till

he had become like an infuriated animal, and had attacked his enemy treacherously and murderously ?

That there was murder in Sir Archibald's glance, Evelyn knew ; and as she recalled it with a shudder, never had Sir Archibald seemed so despicable to her. Even the obnoxious cousin made a pleasanter picture in her mind than Sir Archibald. And he had looked at *her* vindictively. Notwithstanding all his vows his love could not stand the test—his pride was stronger.

“His contemptible family pride !” repeated Evelyn. “Of course he will recover,” she said, “why not ? He is not much hurt—his illness is only the result of passion—that ungoverned temper which the butler said was dangerous, and had been his curse from a boy.”

And yet he had always looked so calm and dispassionate. Except in the matter of his love, which had been far from temperate, Evelyn had always found him imperturbable and

matter-of-fact—perhaps having more of the lamb than the lion in his manner.

Nevertheless Evelyn knew that Sir Archibald loved her.

“To-morrow,” she said, “he will perhaps be sorry and penitent, and ask forgiveness. But how could I trust him after this? And how could we both outlive the scorn of the world? And he looked so coldly and cruelly at me from the first; and, afterwards, like a tiger ready to leap upon me. I will not bear it from him. Why should I?”

She did not pity him, nor suspect that he had acted from maniacal frenzy. Evelyn had found this descendant of a long line of illustrious ancestors very common clay. Familiarity had done its usual work—had broken the idol of imagination, shivered it up into fragments, that *could* not be gathered together *again*.

And she rose up in the quiet night, and went forth from the house where she had been caressed and honoured.

She had no need to pause to listen at Sir Archibald's door—her heart was not with him. Did she remember the day when she was sick, and he had restlessly walked about the passage, lingering now and again for a moment besides her door? Did she not ill requite that tenderness now? Could she not wait till he was better? Must she needs sneak away like a coward in the night, to escape the sneers and scoffs of a supercilious household?

But Evelyn went! She carried her own valise, as she had done many a time before. She could bear a heavier weight than that if necessary, and walk briskly onwards, for the habits of her girlhood had made her strong and able.

“And,” Fay's maid said, “she was a clever packer, too, to cram so many articles of attire in so small a compass.”

Fay *only* wondered and wept. Others did not trouble themselves much about the mysterious departure of a visitor of no degree

How should they when the master of the house was seriously ill? They remarked upon Miss Joyce's absence only to admire its expediency; but Fay missed her, and said to herself—

“If she had known about poor Arlington Evelyn would not have gone—not so soon—alas, poor Evelyn! If you quarrelled with him you can never be reconciled now! And I shall have too heavy a burden to bear alone—Evelyn, you were too impulsive! It is cowardly to leave me thus!”

CHAPTER XV.

MR. GREEN BRINGS THE NEWS.

CHARITY and Matthew Joyce had been disappointed when Evelyn wrote so hurriedly from school to change her plans. When she preferred going to visit her grand friends to returning home to Charity, the latter had wept bitter tears. She had counted the weeks and days that would have to come and go before the happy reunion, till the time had nearly passed. She had long completed all her little preparations for the reception of the young lady sister, who was to return a scholar, and be her pride and pleasure. Evelyn had written so affectionately and sweetly that the heavy forboding which had taken root in Charity's heart at the commencement of Evelyn's school life had passed away—the foreboding of Evelyn's defection or alienated affections. Evelyn

was unspoiled still—loving her faithful Charity almost better than before. And though, at times, Charity dreaded that the humble home, and still more humble ways might shock Evelyn, made sensitive to their deficiencies by intermitted custom, she trusted to the tenderness of Evelyn's nature, to that natural graciousness of disposition which might prompt the girl to hide such feelings, and to display only her heartfelt satisfaction at her return to her loving relatives.

Having cherished such hopes, Evelyn's short letter to say that she had accepted her friend's invitation to Arlington was a trouble to the good, kind sister at home. Charity thought it would have been more considerate of Evelyn to come home first, after her long absence of two years, even had she eventually visited Arlington. But Charity strongly disapproved of such an unequal friendship, independently of her consciousness that it widened the distance between herself and Evelyn.

“She hadn’t ought to have done it,” said Charity indignantly, for once giving open expression to her censure of Evelyn.

“Confound the lass! She’s no sister of mine, never no more,” said Matthew, wrathfully.

“Come now, Matthew, we mustn’t be too hard on her,” said Charity, recalled to her allegiance.

But she was crying still, and Matthew brought down his hand upon the table with no slight force as he remonstrated—

“She’s na’ worth one of your tears, Charity; th’ lass has no heart to desert her own kith and kin. I’ll be bound she never sets foot again within these doors, of her own will—not if she can make these grand folk believe in her, as she seems to have a trick of doing.”

“She’s so winning, Matthew,” said Charity, sobbing.

“Winning or no winning, she’s no value. And all this has come of them Manorys, and

their confounded notice of th' lass years agone. Poor mother was bewitched there, I think—it wasna' like her ordinary gump-tion."

"She was so proud of Eve, Matthew," interposed Charity, in an expostulatory tone.

"Aye, aye!" said Matthew, repentantly. "Well, if the girl comes to harm it's no more than 'alf her fault after all."

"That's what I want you to see, Matthew—what I knew you would see in a moment when you came to yourself a bit."

"Came to myself! Does the woman mean I'm none in my senses?" said Matthew angrily.

"There's but us two left, Matthew—Will's in Ameriky; and Eve may never want us, ever again. Do not let us have words agen each other to-day, Matthew!"

And Charity laid her hand tenderly on the coarse, brown one which had descended with such destructive intent upon the table a moment before.

Matthew Joyce kissed her affectionately, saying soothingly—

“ Well, well, lass, I was o’er hasty ; but dry up them tears. Waste no more time in sighing for Eve, and I will take back them bad words agen the lass. God made her my sister—and she may be thankful to have even brother Matthew’s help some day.”

“ God bless you, dear ! You’re a good man, Matthew,” said Charity, earnestly.

“ Nay, nay, lass ! I’m as full o’ faults as yon hives is o’ honey, so don’t try to get over old Matthew, my girl.”

Since this conversation many weeks had passed ; but Charity had had but few letters from Evelyn, and as she had begun to consider herself as standing in the girl’s light—or what she might consider as such, being the poor, uneducated sister of whom she was half ashamed—Charity had written very seldom to Arlington. Hence the mode of Evelyn’s life there was very much a matter of mere conjecture to Charity and Matthew.

In their humble cottage things went on as much as usual. Mr. Green had not ceased his visits since Charity's refusal of him for a husband ; but had most persistently " held by his hopes, and bided his time," as he called it.

But one evening he came to the cottage in some excitement.

" I want a word with you, Matthew," he said.

" Speak up then, Mr. Green, and I'll listen. Charity and me has no secrets, and if you want me to keep your's dark from her you'd better na' tell it me."

" Now Matthew, man, be reasonable. You know, full well, I would as lief that Charity kept all mine ; but this is about somebody else. Did not your sister go to a place called Arlington awhile ago, Charity ? "

" Yes, yes, Mr. Green ! What of that ? " enquired Charity, eagerly.

" Only that there's a bit of news about

that part of the country which Matthew may like to see," said Mr. Green seriously.

"Matthew doesn't mind about Evelyn as much as me, Mr. Green. Let me see!"

And Charity held out her hand for the paper; but becoming uneasy, she knew not what for, her hand was drawn back again, and her face, which had flushed at first, became paler.

"Tell me, Mr. Green, quick, afore I look, is there aught wrong about Eve?"

"Not much, not much, Charity," said Mr. Green kindly. "There's no harm come to her that I know of, only she's run away from Arlington, out of the noise, as folks say. Don't take on, Charity, it's no worse than that—she's only a bit ashamed of the station she was born to, and that she has been pretty constantly, ever since I knew anything of her. But there is a precious scandal on at Arlington, Matthew, all along of your cousin from Australia, going to claim acquaintance with your sister at Arlington. At least,

that's what I make of it, putting two and two together you see, Matthew. Though how he got to know where your Eve *was* is more than I can make out. The gentleman and he had a scrimmage together, in the grounds somewhere, and, from all I hear, the gentleman came off second best. Anyway, your cousin is in the county gaol for assault and attempted robbery, and the baronet is reported to be in a critical condition; and the young woman, who was the cause of the quarrel, is denounced as an impostor, who had formed a friendship with a member of the family under false pretences. That was your sister; but she had speedily made her escape, and no one knows anything of her whereabouts. She is wanted as a witness at the trial, too."

Matthew had listened in surprised attention, almost suspending his breath from fear of losing a word, and as Mr. Green ended, he exclaimed—

"Lord save us! To think that such evil

should come of our little lass and her vanity ! I expected some'at bad of it from th' first. And what's come of Eve ? She canna become a stray and a vagrant. What's to be done, Mr. Green ? What's to be done ? For how to set agate o' this is more than Matthew Joyce can fathom."

And Matthew got up, and walked to the door to gain inspiration from the outer air, and to conceal his emotion. Charity was moaning, and swaying her body about uneasily in her chair, as she exclaimed—

"And she has na' come home to Charity after all, but has hidden herself away where I shall maybe never find her. Thank God, as no worse harm has come to her ! But I will never rest till I have found my little Eve again, Matthew—never ! Mother left her in our care—it's our duty to search the wide world over for her."

"She will be coming back when the tall has quieted," said Mr. Green, goodnaturedly

“Aye, never fear!” echoed Matthew. “But I’m none agen your looking out for th’ lass. This will lower her proud heart a bit, and ’appen she’ll turn out a sensible woman after all, and be satisfied with her bread and butter. It’s maybe all for th’ best, Charity. Meanwhile it would be a kind o’ comforting to us to know what has come of Eve, Mr. Green,” said Matthew. “Let’s read this newspaper, Charity, and talk things over.”

“I will read it you, word for word,” said Mr. Green. “It’s lucky I came by the paper. A friend of mine—a farmer in those parts—sends me the *Weekly Gazette* now and again; and this week it has been of service to me, at least to those whose interests I study more than my own,” and Mr. Green cast an affectionate glance upon Charity, who, however, was still allaying her mental torture by clasping her hands and making a pendulum of her body.

She, however, listened attentively to the

newspaper account of the circumstance ; but as the description was in the main truthful, and detailed the facts with which the reader is already acquainted, their recapitulation seems unnecessary.

“ Where would she likely go to, Matthew ? ” said poor Charity.

“ I can make no reasonable guess,” said Matthew, thoughtfully. “ And what do you think about cousin John in prison ? It seems a hard case that he should be left without his fortin, and you two lasses to reap th’ benefit of it. I think, Charity, when th’ poor lad comes out of gaol, you’ll be ’most inclined to share with him.”

“ He may have it all, and welcome, Matthew ; it has destroyed all my ’appiness, and if Eve was but home again, th’ money would be well gone.”

“ Are you not a little hasty ? ” said Mr. Green, prudently. “ I would think it over. The young man may not be worthy—a father must have some cause.”

“He’s uncle Abram’s own son, and ’twas his dooty to provide for him if he could,” interrupted Charity, sharply. “How could uncle Abram tell what was to ’appen when he was in his grave. It isna th’ way to mend folk of their bad ways to be too hard on ’em.”

“Gently, sister Charity—not but what there’s a bit o’ truth there, as there is in many a hasty word. But cousin Jack seems to have behaved pretty manfully in th’ matter—if he was a kind of ’gressive, he was no craven to take to his heels when he had th’ chance—if he’d done wrong, he’d bide by it, he said. That pistol was an ugly business, but it came in pretty handy. On th’ whole, I’m sorry for th’ young chap, Charity, and I do believe—it has just come i’ my head—that he’s th’ same man who hung about this cottage for so long—him as I mentioned to you as a likely sort to harbour evil designs agen one. It was th’ man, you may depend, Charity ; and what for he didna

tell his errand is th' wonder, and a pity, too as things have chanced. 'Appen he's a bit of a dare devil, harum scarum sort o' chap, with more mischief than evil in him."

"Never mind cousin John, Matthew," said Charity. "I've no heart to think o' him now."

"You'll find it, lass, afore long, I'm thinking, or you've forgot to be true to your name and calling."

"My heart is sore, Matthew!" said Charity.

"Aye, lass," he said, "and mine too! But there's more than hearts in th' world—there's justice and compensation. Eve's brought all this mischief 'bout, and we must try and help that lad, Charity, to make some amends."

"Yes, Matthew," she replied, meekly, "*that* you shall do, while I seek for Eve."

"We will both set off the morrow t' Arlington, and we shall maybe gather more *perticklers* which will put us on th' right

scent; and being as th' county gaol is nigh, we will go there and hear th' rights of things from cousin John—both sides of th' question, you see, Mr. Green. What say you?"

"It is not a bad idea," replied Mr. Green; "but if I was you, Charity, I would think twice about giving up the money—it is a nice little sum, and would come in handy as you get older."

But Charity impatiently rejected Mr. Green's advice.

"He shall have it—every penny. I am able to work, and like it."

"A wilful woman—you know the rest, Miss Joyce," said Mr. Green, gallantly, as he stepped out into the road.

But if Mr. Green ever had a chance with Charity, he lost it now by giving mercenary advice to a generous mind. It was very well meant; wise enough counsel from a one-sided point of view, and a very small thing to separate chief friends; but Charity never thought so well of Mr. Green from that

night. Not that she had ever loved him, but his persistent, patient attentions had won her sympathy. And who knows what might have been in the future, but for such small beginnings of doubt of the benevolence of the suitor?

The next morning Charity and Matthew set out on their journey, and reached their destination considerably over-weighted by their responsibilities. They did not like to intrude upon the family at Arlington—they were both “shy of their betters,” as they said, and it was a most unpleasant business to broach. Their sister had deceived those who trusted her—in pretending to be a lady she had acted a lie, and done an injury to the family who entertained her; and through this she had brought the head of the household to what was worse than the gates of death.

If Evelyn had but known the consequences, she would never have yielded to temptation; but no one can calculate where

the consequences begin or end of one act of sin, and let no one think that deceit is merely folly. The magnitude of sin is according to discernment—whatever is known to be wrong is certainly sin, and will as certainly bring its due punishment, and that it involves others in this result makes the remorse of the culprit deeper.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM HALL TO PRISON.

It was Fay who received these to her strange visitors. Weeks had passed since Evelyn's flight, and warm-hearted Fay had suffered during those weeks. Her vivacity was quelled, and her face wore an expression of patient anxiety very touching to those who had known her as a thoughtless madcap; she had somewhat of the appearance of a naughty chidden child, whose wilfulness was quite extinguished and penitence complete.

Since Sir Archibald's sentence had been pronounced by the physicians, Mrs. Arlington's disappointment, that her plan for establishing Fay's future could not be carried out, made her irritable and cross. She had even gone so far as to explain to Fay that daughters were troublesome, that she did not know what to do with her now, and that, if

it had not been for Fay's perverseness, she would have been married to Arlington by this time, and that designing girl would have had no chance to bring about all this misfortune—if Arlington had not been exasperated this fatal disease would never have displayed itself. It was all Fay's fault ; and as to Evelyn Joyce, Fay had better never mention her name in Mrs. Arlington's hearing again.

All of which rebukes Fay bore patiently, knowing her own deserts, though she had not yet confessed herself to living being. They still remained at the Hall, as Fay's presence was the only one in which Sir Archibald seemed to find pleasure. It was arranged that he should be placed under the care, and slight restraint of a qualified medical attendant, and a nurse who understood such cases. He was quiet and harmless, but completely insane, and a violent attack might occur at any time. Mrs. Arlington did not like remaining there longer, but she had

yielded to Fay's solicitations, who was so pleased when she saw her poor cousin's eye brighten at her approach.

Thus it was that Charity and Matthew Joyce saw only Fay. She was a little confused when she entered the room. She expected to see relatives of Evelyn, as the name was the same, but when Matthew and Charity confronted her, looking what they were, respectable working people, with no pretensions to gentility in dress or manner—when Charity rose to drop a curtsey and Matthew said, "Good morning, miss," more bluntly than usual from shyness, and shuffled his hat awkwardly in his large, clumsy hands, Fay was amazed and disconcerted. Formerly, she would have had some difficulty to repress her laughter—the ridiculousness of the situation would have struck her. But now poor Fay was too subdued for merriment, and thought only of the importance of Evelyn's safety. She first broke the silence.

"You have the same name as my friend, Miss Joyce. You have come to tell me about her. Pray be seated. I have been very anxious about her."

"Have you, miss," said Charity, gratefully, "then perhaps you will guess what I suffer? She is my sister."

"Your sister!" exclaimed Fay, and she really could not help the horrified tone. Poor Charity blushed.

"I was afraid it might surprise you, miss. I doubt she has deceived you about her folks at home."

"Oh, no!" said Fay. "She never talked about them, that is all. I have been quite as much to blame as she, so take comfort—Miss Joyce."

The last words came out hesitatingly, as if Fay did not quite know how to address her guest.

"But tell me where she is, and if she is well. I shall always love Evelyn—she is so sweet and fascinating—though perhaps we

can never be quite the same confidential friends again—mamma would not allow it. You will perhaps explain that to Evelyn. I should not care for her to think that I only pretended to love her. I am not untrue, indeed, in that way,” and the tremour in the girl’s voice touched Charity’s heart.

“You’re a sweet young lady, miss, and I shall honour you all my life. Thank you kindly for what you’ve been to my Eve.”

“Yes,” interrupted Matthew, “I reckon you deserve our thanks, in the main; but it had ’appen been better for our Eve if she had never set sight on you or such as you. The lass has been spoiled from a baby by too much notice from her betters.”

“But Evelyn is not spoiled,” said Fay shortly, “she is the nicest girl”—

“Oh! thank you, thank you, miss! That she is!” interrupted Charity. “And he is only a bit angered because of her apeing the gentry and getting beyond her lawful station—he will come round towards her by-and-bye, if we can only find her.”

"Find her!" echoed Fay, "is she lost then? Have you not seen her?"

"No miss," said Charity sorrowfully, "we thought maybe you could say where she is."

Fay shook her head mournfully, becoming each moment more tragical in her conceptions of Evelyn's fate.

"Surely she ought to have gone to you at once. Where else could she go? She cannot be living—could she have—oh, Evelyn!" and Fay fairly broke down into sobbing, "did you drown yourself, my poor darling?"

Charity cried and moaned too.

"Eve, you couldna' do it. You couldna be so cruel to yourself and me."

But Matthew spoke out sternly—

"How dare you say such a thing, miss? and, Charity, you're a fool, lass, to heed her words. Eve is bad enough I own, but none so bad as to forget her Maker. The lass is weak, not wicked. And if this is all the comfort th' young miss can give us, we'd best be going, Charity."

But Fay detained them.

“You must have something to eat, Miss Joyce.”

“No!” said Matthew, “we’re none the sort to take so much as a crust belonging to those whom our own flesh and blood has injured—and the poor, weak-headed squire has something of ill to thank our Eve for, so far as I can hear.”

“He had to thank her for some very happy weeks,” said Fay, soothingly. “He was very fond of her, Miss Joyce—we all were!”

“Well, I’m right sorry it has all ’appened, but it’s no use to cry over spilt milk,” said Matthew. “Come on, Charity!”

“And you will let me know when you find her?” asked Fay, pleadingly.

“Aye, miss! Not that it can do much good, for she will never set eyes on you again—we must make her content with her equals. But if it will be a kind of comfort to you to hear on her safety, Charity or me will be letting on you know as she is found.”

But the search for Eve seemed hopeless, Charity had set off from home with a vague idea that her journey would end in Eve's recovery. She felt sure that at Arlington some little circumstance would point out the direction of Eve's flight, but no such circumstance had transpired. Nothing was known, except that she went away from Arlington, in the dead of night, carrying a valise containing a quantity of raiment. By this, Charity knew that she had foreseen the necessities of her case. She intended to live somewhere, and had seen no reason for departing in hot haste, without her wardrobe, to put herself to additional discomfort and expense.

And Charity wondered how much money her poor Eve had managed to save out of that which she knew Eve had possessed, and whether the outfit for the Arlington visit had not exhausted her, according to Charity's notion, amply filled purse. She knew that Eve had no knowledge of the world—that while she lived at Halkingham, she would

have been scared to go alone to a neighbouring town ; but Charity forgot the difference that two years will make in a girl's life—forgot Eve's increased geographical knowledge, and ability to mark out a course for herself.

Charity could not conceive as to the direction towards which Eve might turn her wandering footsteps. So she found out, like many others, the difficulty of tracing a person who hides away. What seems so easy to accomplish, in imagination, is not so when the work is in progress—when money and time is of consideration, and the folly going hither and thither to no purpose apparent. No, Charity Joyce must now wait patiently for some clue, before she go to the rescue of her runaway sister.

But, before they returned to Halking she and Matthew saw their cousin in prison and received an explanation of his conduct—his reasons for annoying Evelyn, and his lingering about Halkingham without

himself known to his cousins there. Matthew immediately identified him with the stranger who had assumed such an alarming espionage, in Matthew's opinion, over their little cottage.

He seemed very penitent for the mischief he had occasioned, especially so when Charity's sorrow for Evelyn was apparent. He was very much depressed by the loss of liberty. He had been awaiting his trial for some weeks, and now, that it was imminent, his lawyer declared there was no case to be brought against him, and that probably he would be acquitted without its being heard. As Evelyn was not forthcoming, Simpkins was the only witness, and his evidence was far from being satisfactory, as he had stood at a little distance when the attack commenced, and could only give a general idea of the assault. That the prisoner had attempted to rob the young lady was clear to the eye of justice, and that he had also wounded Sir Archibald with a pistol

shot was plain ; but it seemed probable that the latter was done, as he asserted, in self defence. Anyway, the case would possibly lapse for lack of a prosecutor, and sufficient circumstantial evidence. The young lady might charge the prisoner with attempted robbery ; but she had not come forward, nor could she be found. And it was quite certain that Sir Archibald had attacked the prisoner in a fit of maniacal frenzy.

Hence, though the prisoner was committed to take his trial for an aggravated assault, and for maliciously wounding Sir Archibald Fane Arlington, Baronet, it was likely the case would never come off, but be dismissed by the grand jury before the court opened.

This was a consolation to Matthew. He took to his Australian cousin immensely ; declared that he was a fine, manly chap, and that Charity should give back her portion of Uncle Abraham's money. This, strange to say, the young man declined to accept. And Matthew said, " he couldna' make him

out—first threatening to have the law agen them, and then refusing a decent offer of th' money, without no trouble nor expense. Why you're a fool, man," said Matthew, bluntly.

"Perhaps I am," replied the young man, with a wistful glance at Charity. But, being pressed for his reasons he, with a good deal of shamefacedness, confessed that he could not bear that Charity should give it up; he would a deal rather she should have the money nor he.

Matthew laughed, and said—

"But you know naught about Charity, you silly chap."

"Well, you must know, when I first made up my mind to come to England, it was at the time I first heard of my father's death—not the time of his death mind, for he had been dead nigh on two years before I knew of it. I was in the bush, and about the diggings, and what not; for, as I preferred that kind of roving life, father and me had

had a few words together. Well, when I came home again, and heard that he was dead and buried, I was sorry enough for that last quarrel; but, when I found that he had left his money to stranger cousins in England, my sorrow gave place to anger, and I thought of setting out to England to see if I could not get justice done—either from them cousins, or by upsetting the will. So I came over here, and I made my way straight to Halkingham. I had ascertained your address from a lawyer in Australia, who made the will; and he had, I reckon, an associate in London who discovered where you lived. I was full of very angry feelings against my relatives, and my fate; but the sight of Charity put them all out of my mind for awhile. I watched her many a bit, as she went round about the little garden, gathering dead leaves, or a few late autumn flowers, or weeding a bit; and I thought so sweet a woman should never be my enemy. It is the plain, honest truth, Matthew; I fell

in love with her; and, though I had been free enough with womankind before, I did not dare to face up. And I wouldn't have told you anything about it now, only you pressed me."

Matthew laughed merrily.

"Well, lad, you've *my* best wishes—it would be a reasonable way of making things square."

But Charity blushed; and cousin John looked sheepish, as he said—

"I ask your pardon, cousin Charity, for my boldness; but I fairly could not help myself—you looked so serviceable and comely."

"Come now," said Matthew, good-naturedly, "a lass ought to take it as a fine compliment."

Which, in truth, Charity did—a woman is always touched by being loved at first sight; it is so spontaneous and impulsive an emotion, that it, in some sort, assures her of its truth. And the delicacy of this man's devotion, who looked and worshipped, yet

did not dare to approach his idol, was exceptional; more especially amongst the working classes. As a fact, Charity's sympathy for cousin John's loss of his inheritance had softened her heart, and she was not very far from that exalted state of feeling which can, at least, accept an avowal of love with complacency.

Cousin John resumed his narrative—

“After leaving Halkingham, I thought to have a look at the other cousin, and I heard she was taking a bit of schooling, to advance herself in the world. I didn't see no harm of that, though it was done with the money that should have been mine. I found the bird flown, and the servants at the school told me that the young woman was gone to Arlington. Before going there, I saw a lawyer chap in London, who told me that the only chance of getting back the money was to prove my father's intellect unsound at the time of making the will; but he said it would be expensive, and, being an honest

man, he did not like to cheat me ; so he said plainly as it would swallow all up in costs. He advised me very kindly, for he was a decent fellow, to get my cousins to go halves with me. Now I did not care so much for the money as for the vexation—because I have always been able to make my bread and cheese, and if I only got my kisses in at the bargain you know, Matthew”—and he gave a bolder glance at Charity—“that would serve me. But in Australia I had neither kith nor kin, and I felt a kind of hankering after these cousins who had robbed me—that is, I mean who had the money I had ought to have. I cannot describe my feelings exactly. I had a sort of desire for the money ; but I wanted kindness from my relatives, either with or without the money. During the time I saw you, Charity, at Halkingham, I swear, lass, that all greed went out of me. But, afterwards, it a kind of tempted me again. I went to Arlington, and, seeing your sister standing there, looking every inch

a lady, I was a bit awed at first; but I knew her from a likeness to you, Charity. I soon recovered myself, and said my say; but, instead of coming forward friendly with her hand, she declared to that lordly weakling besides her that she did not know me, and it was a mistake.

“I was angered now, I own, for she stood there, possessed of my father’s money, wearing clothes bought with it, and could deny our relationship. She *knew* it, for I saw her face flush and grow pale again as she heard my story. As for the gentleman, he treated me as the dirt beneath his feet, with as little consideration, I mean. He told her to leave him and me to settle matters. But just then, as luck would have it, I saw the bracelet and locket that my own mother had valued, worn by the girl who declined friendship with that mother’s son. I lost command of myself for a moment, and took hold of the girl to take them away from her. But, before I had accomplished my object, I

felt a tightening grasp upon my throat, and quick as thought, I used the pistol, which I was in the habit of carrying in my pocket, to relieve myself from the deadly grasp. I do not know how it was that such a course seemed necessary to me. I had twice the strength of that fellow generally, I am sure, but he took me at unawares, and his strength was that of a madman. It was a sickening sensation to feel yourself half smothered. But I believe the circumstance of using firearms, or carrying them at all, would go against me at the trial ; but I am assured by my counsel that I shall get off scot free owing to the baronet's situation. And I have had punishment enough, I think," he added soberly. "I shall never be the same wild shaver again. If you once clip the wings of a free bird it cannot enjoy liberty afterwards."

"Nonsense, man," said Matthew, "you mustna' think so gloomily. Do not be downhearted, John ! Come to us as soon as you are free, and Charity and me will give you a

welcome as shall make you forget this ;
come, Charity, give th' lad a bit of 'courage-
ment to cheer his heart ! ”

“ Forced friendship is worse nor hatred to
some folks,” said John, timidly.

But Charity laid her hand in his, and
said—

“ I have always been sorry as your father
didna' leave you the money, John. I've been
your friend when I didna' know you, and
now, more than ever, I will stand by you.
And Matthew says right, we will make you
kindly welcome at Halkingham, John.”

Charity blushed as she spoke, but John
pressed her hand gratefully, and said—

“ Maybe you will pardon this liberty,
Charity, if your nature is marrow to your
name.”

And he laid a soft kiss upon her lips, which
Charity did not resent.

And as they went out, with her eyes
suffused with tears, she excused herself to
Matthew—

“I was sorry for him, Matthew, shut up in there alone.”

But Matthew chuckled complaisantly, as he replied—

“He has his reward, Charity, and you’ve no need to look ashamed of yourself for giving it him, as I know on, he’s a likely chap.”

“Be quiet with your nonsense, Matthew. Let me a be!” said Charity, with cheeks aflame.

CHAPTER XVII.

AMONGST RESPECTABLE PEOPLE.

“COULD you kindly tell me whether the D—Station is close to the town.”

The question was asked in a third-class railway carriage. The speaker was Evelyn Joyce ; and her voice was timid and hesitating. She had travelled for many weary miles without speaking, although her companions had eyed her favourably enough, and with the friendliness, and ready familiarity of third-class passengers, had endeavoured to draw her into conversation.

But Evelyn had been persistently and moodily silent till now, when near the end of her journey, she addressed a young man who sat opposite to her. He, like herself, had been somewhat taciturn, but he answered courteously, and a grave smile of pleasure

crossed his face when his eyes met those of Evelyn.

He had not been observing her very much, but a business habit of lending his complete attention to anything that required his judgment, caused him to look searchingly at his questioner, and her beauty must have struck him, as his expression was that of one who quietly but thoroughly enjoys the first sight of a lovely picture.

He felt gratified that Evelyn had singled him out of all her fellow passengers to make her simple remark to, and, in truth, she had not done so indiscriminately. He was the most intelligent-looking of them all, if not the most respectable, and though there was a woman sitting next to her of whom perhaps it would have been more natural for the girl to inquire, she had chosen the one the best able to direct her.

“The station is about half a mile from the church, and there are some houses on this side of it, but the town for the most part lies

crossways to the left of the church. It is a long walk to the end of the town, but there is a 'bus generally to meet this train from the King's Arms !”

This was the young man's answer.

“The King's Arms !” repeated Evelyn thoughtfully, and then with considerable hesitation, “Can you—that is if you are not a stranger like myself—can you tell me where I am likely to get lodgings ?”

The young man looked surprised, as he answered—

“It is not much of a place for lodgings. Perhaps you would be wanting pretty good ones ?”

And he eyed Evelyn over inquisitively—taking stock of her in his business-like way.

“I want a clean, respectable shelter,” said Evelyn, humbly.

“Well, I don't know where to recommend you,” was the answer. “My mother had a lodger a while ago, one of my fellow clerks, but she does not take any one in as

a rule, and you see he was out mostly all day—he did not give much trouble. I do not quite know if she would care for a lady lodger.”

And he meditated again, while still regarding Evelyn critically. Apparently he found his examination satisfactory, for he added—

“I daresay she would make no objection to lodge you for a while, at any rate—that is if you think our small rooms will do.”

“Oh, thank you,” said Evelyn gratefully, pleased beyond measure to find her difficulty settled for her. “I will give very little trouble. I am used to doing for myself,” she said, with a bright smile that fascinated her auditor.

And to set him quite at his ease, and partly that there might be no mistake about her position, for Evelyn was wise enough not to set herself up for a fine lady at the onset, she added—

“I am come to D— to learn straw bonnet making.”

“Now that is singular,” said the young man, “for, if mother likes, no one can teach the business better. She has had to do something for herself, you see, being left a widow, and anxious to give her son what advantages she could. It was very different for her in my father’s days ; but if she had not been so industrious I should not have been where I am now—she’s the best of mothers.” And the young man again smiled gravely in mentally contemplating his mother’s virtues.

They had now reached the station, and when Evelyn explained that the valise was her only luggage, he took charge of it, carrying it as if it were a feather’s weight.

“If you are so minded, as the afternoon is fine, we will walk on. One’s limbs get cramped with sitting so long, and the ’bus is not up to time to-day.”

Evelyn did not object, and the two set out for their walk. Evelyn was quite at home with him already—almost more so than she could have been at first even with her own

people. The descent from Arlington, in the social scale was not so great, though very considerable, we must own.

But Evelyn could have laughed for pleasure that it was so. She felt so relieved, so natural at coming again amongst those who were her equals. Notwithstanding all that had passed, she threw care to the winds, and was as merry as a girl fresh from the restraint of school-life. It was a great relief to be natural, after two years of constant repression.

Her companion thought his mother ought to be thankful to get hold of so blithe a creature for a lodger ; and when he opened the door of his home, which was in the middle of a row of modest houses at the outskirts of the town, he exclaimed cheerfully—

“ Here, mother, come and see what I have brought you now ! ”

An elderly, thin little person came forward, dressed in black, and still wearing a widow's cap. She was a decent, prim, orderly-look-

ing person, who you might take for a seamstress, or a woman in charge of a church or offices—she might be anything, in fact, that was respectable and not laborious. But she was shrewd and sharp-tempered, and eyed her unknown visitor askance.

“What does the lady want, Robert? I am sure I should be very pleased to be of service—that is if my humble offer might be accepted.”

“She wants lodgings, mother, and I said you would take her in willingly for a night or so, or longer.”

“I don’t know, Robert,” she replied, looking suspiciously at Evelyn. “You know the rooms are not cleaned up, and I *did* say after John Mills left, I would never take in again.”

It was evident that the old lady was unwilling to accommodate Evelyn, but her son said, in a manly, determined voice—

“Come, mother, what I have agreed to must be done, and you will not be sorry when

you know who you have. She is not a fine young lady, but has come to work in straw and get her own living."

This was almost as good as a character to Mrs. Reed. Here was something tangible—a girl come into the place to earn honest wages, and not a beautiful stranger, come from the clouds as it were—how, and for what purpose, no one knew.

So Mrs. Reed began to look less suspicious, less like a little cross-grained smooth-haired terrier sniffing round about the stranger with the discernment of its species. Besides Robert was Mrs. Reed's only son ; and his will was law.

"Well, Robert, I'm not going to object this time," said his mother, in a long-suffering tone, which explained how many times she had fruitlessly done so, and a faint resolution to be less easily won over the next time.

Not that it was so, but she liked to imagine herself badly used, and that she had

much to put up with from her thoughtless fellow-creatures.

Evelyn said sweetly and humbly—

“I am so much obliged to you. One is so lonely and strange in a new place ; and if you would let me get my own room ready it would spare you trouble, and I should feel at home at once.”

This was “something likely,” Mrs. Reed thought, “better, any way, than a helpless man, who couldn’t shake his own feather bed.” If the girl were handy and would help a bit, Mrs. Reed would object to her lodger less, for the old lady did not love work overmuch ; and like many who have acquired a habit of sedentary labour, she found even the light housework she was obliged to do objectionable.

So that it was with some satisfaction that Mrs. Reed saw Evelyn flit hither and thither, “setting things to rights” with a rapidity that would have startled Charity Joyce, who

had known her as the slow, lazy Eve, whom Matthew so frequently admonished for idleness.

And soon Evelyn had won Mrs. Reed's consent to assist her with the tea table, and was toasting her face brown by the fire as well as the bread; and when all was ready, and the three together sat down to tea, Robert thought the toast delicious, and the tea excellent, which Evelyn had begged to be allowed to pour, for a treat, while she had placed the only arm-chair in the room for Mrs. Reed to rest upon more comfortably.

They took tea in the parlour. This was Mrs. Reed's sacrifice to gentility. She always carried the meals in there, though there being usually only herself and Robert, they might well have been satisfied to eat off the kitchen table.

But Evelyn thought the kitchen by no means comfortable. She would have thoroughly enjoyed going back to the old

habits in that respect, but Mrs. Reed's kitchen was very different to Charity's—it was neither bright nor clean.

“And now,” said Mrs. Reed, when they were seated, “tell us, Miss—I forget your name, if Robert ever mentioned it?”

“Eve, I am called,” replied the girl simply.

“Oh, Miss Eve, then, I suppose?”

“Just Eve,” pleaded the girl, prettily.

But Mrs. Reed was genteel, and thought that savoured too much of the homely, so she persistently repeated—

“Miss Eve, you must tell us where you have travelled from to-day. I daresay you have had quite a journey?”

“I came from beyond London,” said Eve ambiguously. “I have been travelling since daybreak.”

“Dear me, to think of that now, Robert,” said the old lady. “I wonder how she keeps up—I should be sick as possible if I had been all those hours in the train. What a blessing it is to be young and strong!”

And Mrs. Reed sighed. She was very fond of sighing—it won sympathy sometimes, and as it helped to recall herself to the joylessness of her existence, she was often observed to do so when her contentment had reached its maximum. From which we may gather that Mrs. Reed was one of those dissatisfied mortals who never will believe in their own happiness.

But she was, after all, as her son had said, one of the best of mothers, as she had worked hard to give him educational advantages, and made much of him in her own fashion—which fashion her son tolerated with a good grace, having been accustomed to it from his infancy.

Robert Reed was a good, steady young man, and not without considerable attainments—that is so far as his profession went. Although Robert Reed had assumed that he was but a clerk in his preliminary conversation with Evelyn, he was something more than that—he was a rising man, as his

masters plainly foresaw ; and they were not disinclined to give him a lift up the ladder of success ; nor were they entirely disinterested in this resolve, for Robert Reed's services were valuable, and were likely to make the firm notorious.

Upon leaving school Robert had taken a situation as clerk in an architect's office, but he had shown so much ability and natural talent for the higher branches of the art that his clerkship was soon virtually ended. The pupils in the office—gentlemen's sons—who had paid heavily for the knowledge which the Messrs. Sims were supposed to be capable of imparting, had frequently designs given them to work upon.

For instance, a hall or church had to be planned, and for practice, these young men were allowed to design one according to their own conception of beauty and convenience, and, as too often happened, the pupil would spend two or three mornings fruitlessly in studying the site without finding an architec-

tural idea forthcoming, and would then invite Robert Reed's suggestions and follow them, till, finally, the latter gave much thought and time to the employment, and after many months an elaborate specimen was much commended by the firm and thought worthy to be made of practical use—not, however, without sundry alterations, which made the plan perfect by the superior talent of the head of the firm.

But Mr. Sims was surprised, and prophesied a brilliant future for the clever pupil, who had to confess that he had palmed off another man's work as his own.

From this time Mr. Sims, the chief partner, consulted Robert Reed a good deal, and profited by his advice, though he did not at first own the fact to himself, but tried to believe that he, good-naturedly, assisted a young man to rise.

There was now no longer any doubt of Robert Reed's ability, and he was offered a junior partnership, and was thus secured from

setting up in opposition to the firm which had nurtured his talent. It was about now that this arrangement was on the *tapis*.

In appearance Robert Reed was insignificant; he was short in stature, and rather squarely built; and his face was unadorned with beard or whisker. His hair was dark and abundant, his complexion pale, and his features plain; but his large grey eyes were thoughtful, searching, and honest, and his brow broad, high, and placid. His countenance was comely, rather than good-looking, but it was a face to interest many people from its intelligence, and when its usual gravity was driven away by the rare smile, it was very pleasing.

Habitually the mouth was firmly set, and denoted resolution and self-control. He was a man who a stranger would be apt to trust. You instinctively felt him to be reliable, and that he would never disappoint you if you became on confidential terms together.

But he had not many friends. He was

reserved and unsociable as a rule, and hence, when he took a liking to any one he never changed his mind about it, like more rash men might do, but remained faithful and true. On the whole Evelyn Joyce had her usual luck in coming amongst such respectable people.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DENOUEMENT.

Mrs. REED was very willing to initiate Evelyn into the simple art of plaiting straw, in consideration of some household help in exchange; and Evelyn, applying herself assiduously to her new business, soon made fair progress.

And she cleaned the house, and metamorphosed the kitchen as she wished; and she made dainty dishes such as she had seen Charity prepare on high occasions, and all went on well in the little household, and in the main, peaceably.

But "seeing her so sweet and serviceable, *Robert* had longing in him evermore to stoop and kiss the tender little thumb that crost the trencher as she laid it down." But he never showed his humour as Evelyn was in his mother's house, and he feared to disturb the

comfortable intimacy that had sprung up between them.

And Evelyn, her placidity undisturbed by spoken words of love, was ever on the alert to supply his wants, and to “compass him about” with those attentions which a man loves at all times ; but, most of all, from her whose very presence is a joy.

Evelyn had to put up with Mrs. Reed’s dull humours and disagreeable reflections, but this her natural sweetness of temper enabled her to do. And that she did so made Robert joyous, for he had often wondered whether any wife of his would be likely to honour his mother and humour her crotchets.

Thus we see that Robert had not hastily come to the resolve of the knight of fame, that “here by God’s rood is the one maid for me !” He had never asked about her previous life—he was too generous a man to force confidence, much as he longed to hear her little history. Mrs. Reed had been less reticent ; but Evelyn had kept her own counsel, so

that, though some months had passed since she became an inmate of their house, the Reeds knew but little about her.

Mrs. Reed was not without anxiety on her son's account; as being his mother, she was not slow to read his heart, and she was ambitious for her only son. She was constantly speaking to her lodger of his splendid prospects, and hoping that it would be many years before he committed the folly of marrying.

"I tell him to bide till he makes his money, and then he can win some fine lady suitable to his changed circumstances."

To all of which Evelyn would listen with an unmoved countenance, and, as she was neither bold nor confused in Robert's presence, Mrs. Reed's suspicions would be allayed for the time being. But, by degrees, there was a change in her lodger, which did not escape Mrs. Reed's keen eye. She lived more to herself—was less cheerful, and when Robert was in the house she frequently went to her

own bedroom. This made Robert downcast and miserable. And Mrs. Reed began to look coldly at the girl.

But, one morning, Evelyn burst into sudden tears, and said she could bear to deceive Mrs. Reed no longer, and that she would leave. She had been so happy there, forgetting all that had passed, and now the truth had come to her, and it was not possible to stay any longer, even if Mrs. Reed would have her.

But Mrs. Reed offered Evelyn no comfort, and her sobs could not be repressed, as she exclaimed—

“You are thinking some wrong of me, Mrs. Reed?”

“You had no business to bring disgrace to an honest woman’s house,” replied Mrs. Reed, “and one, too with a son whose good name is more precious than gold. I have seen a change in you of late, and have suspected the truth, which you so audaciously own.”

“At least believe that it is no disgrace,” said Evelyn, and she drew from her neck, beneath her dress, a chain with the diamond locket, a hoop of diamonds, and a plain gold wedding ring. And Mrs. Reed’s heart smote her for having been too hard upon Evelyn, because, under cover of her discontent and irritability, Mrs. Reed possessed an amount of kindness.

“Poor lamb! She has been deceived!” she said.

“No, no!” said Evelyn. “It is I who deceived him.”

And she told her strange story, and humbled herself to this woman. She did not spare herself; but owned her wickedness; and, in conclusion, she added—

“I have told you all—everything; and I have made a solemn resolve to be no more the mean, deceitful, ambitious girl of the past; and, may God forgive me for all the sorrow my pride and vanity have brought

upon others! I never expect to be happy again, Mrs. Reed; but my heart is relieved from a heavy burden this day."

"If you are sorry for your sin, child, it is better," said Mrs. Reed. "But how could a young girl like you have the heart and will to act so deceitfully? What will Robert say? I'm thinking that he will never believe in women again."

"You must not tell him—I could not bear him to know; and I will go away," sobbed Evelyn.

"And you think that will prevent him from seeking to learn more of you," said Mrs. Reed. "You do not understand a man's heart, child. If you had, you would never have left that poor husband of yours to fancy you dead all these months. When you made your vows at the altar, you were no baby to believe it all play work. Robert will tell you to go back to your husband."

"I could not do it; I dare not," said

Evelyn. "He hated me the moment he heard how lowly I was—he looked cruelly at me—I can never return to him ! "

"The girl will drive me out of all patience—as if a man did not need to be angry when his wife had deceived him ; and, I say again, you do not know a man's heart—it is not a slight, fickle, changeable thing like that of a foolish girl—a man who loves forgives much. But you were not the only one to blame ; so take heart, my girl. This husband of yours, and his cousin, must have had very little sense to cajole a young parson into performing the ceremony secretly, in a neighbouring church. And I wonder how the vicar of the place could be blinded to what was happening ; and the clerk, too. And what became of the register ? I suppose that is in the book in the vestry to show it all up ? "

"It was signed properly," said Evelyn, "and the old clerk was by at the time ; but we were dressed in plain morning costumes, and he thought it was just a common

wedding; and the names never struck him as belonging to any one he had ever heard of—such people do not consider about the names; they are too used to entering them. As for the vicar, he was away, and Mr. Gerard Petre was taking charge of his parish at the time, and probably there would be the names of other couples entered in the book before his return, and he would never notice any separately, or perhaps not even glance down the page. As for Mr. Gerard Petre, Fay—that is Miss Arlington—could make him do anything she wished. I am sure she was nearly as much to blame as I; for she hurried matters along to please Sir Archibald. However, perhaps I was only too willing. I thought it grand to have the chance of being Lady Arlington; and now, I would give half my life to undo the marriage. But what is my life to me that I shouldn't give it all, for the matter of that?" said Evelyn, sobbing painfully, and hysterically. "If one cannot pass it with those one loves, life is a dreary thing."

"Come, dry up your tears, and take heart," said Mrs. Reed, not unkindly. "You will, perhaps, come to think life dreary without Sir Archibald. Love comes to many women after marriage."

"Never to me!" said Evelyn, sadly and decisively. "It might have been if all had gone smoothly at first, and I had never found out my mistake by living here. It is too late now! Alas, I bring nothing but sorrow to those whom I love and honour, or to those who love me!"

The girl's misery was extreme, and Mrs. Reed had compassion on her; but she could not be blind to the meaning of her words, and she said—

"You had best keep those feelings to yourself, and try to crush them, and set your mind towards wifely duty. And never let my Robert hear such words from your lips—to tempt him to forget what is due to you and himself."

"What do you think of me, to dare say

such a thing?" said Evelyn, indignantly. "Am I the vile thing you make me? And if I were, are not his honour, his good name, his future prosperity, and happiness dearer to me than my own?"

And the girl buried her face in her hands in despair. It was true, for Evelyn had at last forgotten her selfishness. Love had dawned in her heart, enlightening it as the sun does the earth, filling it with beauty and purity; but alas! not with hope and joy! To encourage and feed her love were sin; and yet it was the most ennobling passion the girl had ever known. Evelyn felt that her punishment was heavier than she could bear—not than she deserved. She was humbled to the dust, and would willingly have crawled at the feet of her unavowed lover to hear him own her unworthiness if but she might venture to hope for a pitying word, and a glance that betrayed his unchanged love.

For, as yet, she was only at the lowest

stage of repentance. She regretted the past, because Robert Reed would be injured by it. She did not doubt his love for her. Her deepest pain lay in the fact, that this creature of her idolatry would condemn her for her meanness.

This man who, unlike herself, had never striven for a place unlawfully; but had nobly worked for, and honourably won a great position—for all hold that to be great which is secured by effort and struggle, and no success is earned solely by talent—this man, I say, was her conscience.

And Robert Reed's mother strove to rouse and encourage the wretched girl, when she said—

“Yours was not all the sin. I wonder how long you were to be in the position of an unacknowledged wife. It seems to me a mighty indignity offered you.”

“But it was only for a time,” said Evelyn proudly. “We were to go abroad, and stay there for some time, and the wedding would be supposed to take place there.”

“I think your aristocratic husband might have had the decency to wait a little,” replied Mrs. Reed, bluntly. “Well, you must go straight away back to your lawful husband, and prove yourself to be an honest woman before anybody has the chance to doubt you, as I did. And put your wedding ring on. It would have been a deal better if you had worn it from the first, so far as I and mine are concerned. And I cannot tell why you didn’t—it would have been more natural and right.”

“If I had come to you as a married woman would you have taken me into your house so readily?” said Evelyn. “Would you not have insisted upon knowing why I was going about the world, a married woman, without a husband? Would you not have suspected that I merely wore the ring, being no wedded wife?”

“It may be so; but anything would be better than a scandal in a decent body’s house.”

“I thought only of myself,” said Evelyn.

"And it seems to me that is pretty much all you have ever thought about in your life," said Mrs. Reed. "A selfish girl you are, for all your winsome ways. But I must think how to break such startling news to my boy!"

"You will not tell him all," said Evelyn, "only that I am married, or I should never hold up my face again before him."

"I shall tell him enough to show that you are not the nice-principled young woman whom he has believed in. But you must be comforted," added Mrs. Reed, relenting as she saw Evelyn's grief and penitence. "You had better keep upstairs to-night, and Robert and I will talk the thing over, and plan what is best for you to do. But if I have my way you will not leave this house till your brother and sister are told, and I hope they will tell you your duty as plainly as I do—that a wife must make the best of the husband she has married, and stay by his side; even putting up with his scorn and anger, so long

as he is a good husband as a rule—and, even if he is not, when children come, it is best to bear your lot. But I think your own folks must be a bit flighty to have countenanced your doings.”

“Oh, no, no!” sobbed Evelyn. “You should see Charity. She is the dearest, and most upright of women. And Matthew is as good as gold, though a little harsh to me when I was at home, because he hated my ‘stuck-up’ notions, as he called them. But, Mrs. Reed, believe me, I am quite humble now. I would give the world to live the past two years again—to take up my life at Halkingham just where I left off. But it cannot be! Oh, Charity! Charity! Will *you* forgive me and comfort me? Can I be your little Eve once more? But Matthew will never countenance me—he will be unforgiving—perhaps he will disown me and keep Charity from me. Oh, my God! I am in sore need of a woman’s kindly sympathy—give me Charity!”

CHAPTER XIX.

MAKING THE ROUGH PLACES SMOOTH FOR HER.

Mrs. REED never knew what a sharp blow was struck at her son's happiness that day. She thought he took her tidings calmly. But the man was self-contained and undemonstrative. He heard all the story quietly ; but he would not suffer his mother to condemn the girl.

“Do not, mother !” he said. “It pains me to hear of wrong-doing in so young and lovely a creature—and we do not know all. I will never believe but there are excuses to be found for her—I will never hear a word against her if there are *not*,” he added harshly, for his heart was sore.

He spoke in a hard voice ; but that would have betrayed the extent of his emotion to a keen observer of human nature. Mrs. Reed

did not quite understand her son. He had rested his brow on his hands, and his elbows on the table while the character of the girl he loved was disclosed. He had been silent during the narrative; but when his mother began to denounce her conduct he found words to defend her. *He* might blame her; but he would suffer no other living being to give utterance, in his hearing, to their disapproval of the woman whom he still cherished in his heart. He had loved her, not knowing her to be the wife of another; and it would take years to eradicate that love. She had acted dishonourably; but she had been led astray by her vanity and bad training—for Robert Reed would never believe, while he lived, that she had wilfully planned to deceive. She had been led into error by the force of circumstances, and she had followed those thoughtlessly without knowing the evil and peril of the course. Whatever sin she had done would be visited upon her, in present or future suffering, or

both; and her fellow-creatures ought never to add to that, by their reproofs and short-sighted, fallible judgment. So argued Robert Reed.

He went out directly after his conversation with his mother, and Evelyn, sitting upstairs at the window, saw him go down the street, and noticed that his head was bowed—that he did not meet the heaven-sent breezes gratefully as was his wont; but dejectedly passed on his way, with slow footsteps, like one unconscious of the time, place, or his own object in walking.

And Evelyn knew that he had heard all; and that, for her sake, the joyous springs of this man's life had departed. And she exclaimed, "My love! my love! Would that I had never disturbed your peace! Why was I born to bring this sorrow upon you? And yet—oh! my heart's love, I could ill afford to part with that which is my only joy—my pride—my happiness—the crown of my life—and yet my sorrow! To know your love

mine is sweet ; but to see your misery is my woe ! ”

And late at night Robert Reed came back ; and Evelyn, sleeplessly tossing on her pillow moaned again, “ My love ! My lost love ! ”

And she heard him go forth in the morning, earlier than usual by some hours ; and she guessed the reason—that he had gone to catch the early morning train to tell Charity and Matthew about her—that he had gone to make the rough places smooth for her—to intercede for her—to obtain pardon if need be, this man who was wounded by her deception !

He did not cast her off utterly then—he was still her friend—still her self-appointed protector, as he had been from the day they first met. Though the girl’s heart smote her that she had pained this noble being of her worship, she had a sweet blessed sense of contentment, that the one who was dearest to her should thus interest himself in her happiness, and show that it was of paramount im-

portance to him—beyond ah, far beyond his own comfort! So important, that he deserted his precious business on her account—that business, which had hitherto been his mistress, and had been served more punctually and unweariedly than anything else.

The girl felt comforted, her anguish was alleviated, and she fell asleep, with a sweet smile of satisfaction upon her lips.

And Mrs. Reed, when she came softly in to tell her of Robert's mission, found her thus, and said to herself, "She is either a hardened, cruel woman, to take matters so easily, or a thoughtless girl without heed of trouble. She looks innocent as a baby in her sleep, poor child," she added reluctantly. "And after all she has done herself the worst injury, and Robert seems to make small account of her, so that I have no need to keep resentment uppermost in my mind."

But when Evelyn was awake, Mrs. Reed thought, "She might have had the gratitude to show a bit of surprise, at least, that Robert

has lost a whole day from his work, and fashed himself to get up betimes, to help a thankless hussy such as this."

She did not know—she could not understand, how much of bliss was mingled with Evelyn's woe, how her feelings had gone beyond gratitude—how the perception of their mutual love had lessened the possibility of obligation. Still less could she imagine that the intrusion of love had acquainted Evelyn with Robert Reed's purpose, as he left the house at the dawn of day.

Mrs. Reed thought that Evelyn was a thankless girl, in more respects than this. In a worldly sense, Evelyn might be proud of the station which her marriage to the baronet had given her. Many a girl, Mrs. Reed thought, had borne a good deal of neglect and contumely from a husband, gladly, for the sake of such a position.

Mrs. Reed had been somewhat impressed by the good fortune which Evelyn had regretted too late. She was not without am-

bition herself, and, though she could see plainly the error and wickedness of Evelyn's past actions, she was, with all her virtuous indignation, the more willing to condone them that Evelyn was, in virtue of her marriage, a lady of some degree.

The girl's manœuvring had succeeded—otherwise Mrs. Reed would have been more genuinely indignant. Now, as Robert's heart was unwounded, she thought, and the girl lawfully wedded to a baronet of ancient lineage, it was well to keep in with such a grand personage, and in her opinion, Evelyn ought to be proud—glad—grateful—and only regretful that her conduct had been bad. Mrs. Reed made certain that the baronet would receive her with a warm welcome, for the girl was beyond doubt attractive, and men had before now injured their prospects in life for the smile of an English Cleopatra.

So Mrs. Reed busied herself about the house, preparing for the reception of possible

guests, as Robert might bring back Evelyn's friends, and she declined Evelyn's assistance, as it was not fit nor proper that a lady of Arlington should in this way demean herself, and had she known it before, it should never have happened, that she, Mrs. Reed, should be beholden to her for household help, seeing as she knew her duty to those of the great world better than that.

But Evelyn was hurt, for this was the mother of him she loved, and in a manner doing for her was like service rendered to himself. Besides work was wholesome for her in her present unhappy humour, and Evelyn pined like a caged bird upstairs in her little room, and brooded over the wrongs she had done, full of the dread of returning to her husband, and of doubt whether Charity would be changed towards her.

But after all, at the bottom of her heart, she had her comfort in the knowledge that Robert Reed was the arbitrator of her fate. She was sure that her mediator was irresist-

ible. Had *she* not found him so? And who could turn a deaf ear to *him*, when he pleaded the cause of mercy and love?

“Not Charity,” said Evelyn to herself triumphantly; “Not Charity.”

END OF VOL. I.



